GY

Gc
929.2
As88t
1266645

M. L

REYNOLDS HISTORICAL
GENEALOGY COLLECTION

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 1833 01145 3716

GENEALOGY
929.2
AS88T

SEP 15 '04

Tribal Feeling

Tribal Feeling

MICHAEL ASTOR

READERS UNION
JOHN MURRAY
London 1964

© MICHAEL ASTOR 1963

This RU edition was produced in 1964 for sale to its members only by Readers Union Ltd at Aldine House, 10–13 Bedford Street, London W.C.2 and at Letchworth Garden City, Herts. Full details of membership may be obtained from our London address. The book is set in 11 point Garamond type leaded and has been reprinted by Butler & Tanner Ltd, Frome. It was first published by John Murray Ltd.

To PANDORA

1266645

Recd May 25-1977

Contents

	Foreword: Echoes	1
1	Astors	7
2	Mr Langhorne's Circus	22
3	Fusion	38
4	Confusion	50
5	Cliveden	60
6	Schooling	83
7	Learning	102
8	Tribal Feeling	121
9	The Cliveden Set	136
10	A Military Interlude	148
11	Under Restraint	172
12	Westminster	187
13	Echoes	216
	Index	221

Illustrations

between pages 116 and 117

John Jacob Astor (1763–1848) by Gilbert Stuart

Chiswell Dabney Langhorne (1843–1919) and Phyllis

William Waldorf Astor (1848–1919)

Nancy and her mother

Nancy and Bobbie

Nancy Astor with Wiss, David (in sailor suit) and self

Cliveden

Cliveden family group

The first two women Members of Parliament,
Mrs Wintringham and Nancy Astor

Waldorf Astor (1879–1952) and Philip Lothian

Author's Note

I am very grateful to the Hon. Angus McDonnell and to the late Victor Cunard for their essays from which I have quoted in chapters 2 and 3. I wish to thank Angus McIntyre for his invaluable research which contributed greatly to the chapter on the 'Cliveden Set'. I wish also to thank the editors of *Encounter* for their permission to reproduce chapter V, the greater part of which was published by them in 1959 under the title 'Childhood at Cliveden'.

Most of my information about John Jacob Astor comes from his biography, written by Kenneth Porter. I am also indebted to *The New York Times* and *The New York Herald Tribune* for allowing me to use their libraries.

FOREWORD

Echoes

Rummaging through the library of *The Times*, turning over the faded yellow copies of one of its back numbers, I found in the personal columns the following two notices. They were sandwiched in between some eighty other notices of a less fanciful nature, concerned for the most part with the search and offer of employment, the lease of rooms, the adoption of children and the sale of unwanted clothes and family nick-nacks. The first notice read: 'To VERY LAME OFFICER taking taxi outside Solomon's, Saturday. Advertiser would like TAKE you for a DRIVE some day. V. Box J.21.' The second read: 'Fair lady with orchids, "Romance" Saturday night, in box, requested COMMUNICATE with gentleman third row stalls.' To anyone engaged on research of a peripheral nature both these notices offered much room for speculation. V, always assuming that she was not just soliciting any officer who happened to pick up the paper that morning, was, I imagined, a spinster lady ready to combine war work with striking up an acquaintance with an officer, a lame one perhaps being easier to catch than one in possession of the full use of his limbs. Or she may have just convinced herself that she had fallen in love at first sight.

The case of the gentleman in the stalls, assuming that he was not writing the whole thing in code, posed an even harder problem of identification. To start with he gave no box number. How could the fair lady communicate with him? Did he suppose he was the only gentleman in the third row of the stalls? And if so, had he, I wondered, actually had a romance in the box at the theatre? While the play was going on? As an alternative attraction to what was happening on the stage? Or was it conducted remotely and surreptitiously, with winks, inaudible sighs, and the occasional

twirling of his moustaches? At this extreme point of the periphery my imagination was invited to run wild. The only solid fact I could deduce was that the use of English and capital letters, as carried in this feature of the press, was a little more droll on 11 April 1916, the day it was published, than it is today.

The Court Circular column of the same edition carried the announcement that Mrs Astor had, the previous day, given birth to a son at 4 St James's Square. In the adjoining column was a letter from a Mr Benjamin Broadbent of Huddersfield on 'Deaths in infancy. The right way of saving young life.' The Court Circular carried the news that Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein had left London for Luton, and that Lady Cecile Goff had returned to Carrowroe Park from Normanton Park, Stamford. On the same page was an advertisement on how to be slender if over-developed, how to be cured of lumbago and rheumatism, and how to regain mental and physical energy. The remedy was to be found by calling on Mr A. Vernon-Ward of 2 Vere Street, Cavendish Square, or appealing to him at his Brighton establishment 42 St Aubyn's, Hove. Lord Torpichen, a Scottish laird, had announced his engagement to Grace Douglas, second daughter of Mr and Mrs Winslow Pierce of Long Island, U.S.A. The American Ambassador was due to attend a meeting of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society at the Westminster Palace Hotel.

Other than reports of a social or purely speculative nature *The Times* that day devoted most of its space to the German attack on the French front west of the Meuse, to the fighting in Mesopotamia, to some post-mortem views on the withdrawal of allied troops from the Gallipoli Peninsula, and to a speech by Mr Asquith, the Prime Minister, at Lancaster House, in which he re-affirmed that the Allies would win the war and rejected the notion, currently a rumour, that Britain was a nation facing defeat and interested in negotiating peace terms with Germany.

The theatre notices announced that Sarah Bernhardt was appearing at the Coliseum; and that Viola Tree, Irene Vanburgh, Gerald du Maurier and George Robey were giving a performance

for charity at Drury Lane. Sir Thomas Beecham was conducting grand opera at the Aldwych. In Parliament Sir Frederick Banbury (later created Lord Banbury), the most reactionary Unionist Member of a fairly die-hard lot, was complaining of the fact that Members of Parliament were being paid for their services.

These few extracts carried an echo of an age, the immediate post-Edwardian era. All societies are continually moving and altering, although some of them convey, on the surface, an illusion of permanence, of absolute standards and values controlling them. In 1916 English society was undergoing a transformation more rapid and radical than any recognized by its historians in the past, though this fact was not evidenced by most of its established figures. The Russian Revolution, complementary though not symptomatic of this change, was still a year away. Men were being killed by their thousands at the front. The natural leaders of this generation were dying by their hundreds in the trenches. Some others, staying at home, were making their fortunes or merely establishing their reputations. It was not easy at the time to differentiate between the innovators of the age and those who were merely clever enough to exploit the situation of flux and uncertainty. Anyone living in England in 1916, old enough to be interested in what was going on in the world around him, might well have been torn between a sense of the country's history, grandeur and imperial heritage which was shown up in stark relief by the appalling sacrifices which the war had wrought on the nation, and the awareness of a new concept of society, less insular, less rigid, stimulated and troubled by ideas which seemed to stem partly from Europe and from the New World of North America. I was born into an Anglo-American household; and later when I was old enough to think and reason this two-way pull, of the old and the new, coloured both my thoughts and behaviour. Now in selecting from a kaleidoscope of impressions and events certain patterns for my purpose, I am aware that even where I succeed in depicting a character I will only be revealing a limited aspect of what I set out to portray, and a slanted one at that. My view is personal, and therefore prejudiced; and it

will be the quality of my prejudice, and the extent to which I am able to reveal it, that will tell.

But who am I? This is a question I have asked myself and to which, only with the process of time, have I found a partial answer. I am not primarily concerned with my family tree (which, I find, is only interesting in as far as it has survived a number of transplanting operations), although I have sometimes speculated as to whether I have in my veins any Jewish blood, because my family, while it appears in my microscope to be Nordically conventional and inflicted with Puritan restraint, has occasionally, in its migratory habits, behaved in the same way that the Jews have behaved. The migratory habits of my forebears seem insufficient evidence for me to claim a Semitic origin which, in any case, is not strictly relevant to my story. I was taught when I was a child that I was in some ways identical with God, a baby God imaging his omnipotence and perfection. That really did little to establish my identity; and for those who believe in God, as I do, but possibly feel more certain of *his* identity than I do, my life so far has gone quite a long way to disprove the original and implanted theory in the context in which it was suggested.

Not so very long ago I was walking down Jermyn Street on my way to lunch at my club. Hurrying towards me from an opposite direction I noticed a man: something in his hurried manner, half conventional and half absurd, caught my attention. He was of medium height and wore a bowler hat, one with the brim just sufficiently curved to make it fashionable, even *de rigeur*, before the last war. The bowler hat was tilted and lent to its owner a touch of raffishness which, in the pre-war London context of the rest of his clothes, gave his appearance an air of what would either have been interpreted as vulgarity or non-conformity, depending on whether other considerations would have made the man under the hat a leader or a follower of fashion. He wore a stiff collar and a small black and white check tie studded with a pearl pin. Round his neck hung a monocle which swung from a black silk thread. His suit fitted immaculately. He carried a rolled-

up umbrella and a pair of grey suede gloves. He also had a moustache that looked as if he had borrowed it from a wig-maker. He looked worried, anxious and lost. His camouflage was as near perfect as he could devise. In fact, in a somewhat theatrical way, he nearly looked the part he was playing, except that he shuffled rather than walked as if he were frightened of the tread of his own feet. His fine clothes and studied appearance did not help him. He was worried and lost and, so it appeared, had retreated behind his disguise. Everything, or nearly everything, that he had intended to show was, according to the image which he wanted to present of himself, correct. He bore the insignia of (as he thought) people who do not worry, who are not chivied, who in London are accepted, respected, and not interfered with wherever they go. (He was a little out in this, his conception of a mask denoting inviolability being some twenty years out of date.) In my imagination I could almost hear him saying to himself: 'This is the image. Get nearer to it. Stick, man, for Heaven's sake stick to the disguise.'

And who, I wondered, was he? Quite apart from who did he think he was?

I had no wish to rip off his mask, to leave him exposed and trembling. What good would that do, to him or anyone else, to destroy his protective colouring? Had my knowledge of people and of myself convinced me that everything in his external make-up fitted and fulfilled a function that could have been applied to me, I would have run off and bought myself a moustache, or several moustaches, one for every day. The significance of all this, the feeling of being lost which carried with it a mild air of absurdity that I detected in another creature, and the fact that I could recognize this, was rather more poignant than something that called for a cold-blooded analysis.

In trying to explain what I saw and what I thought about in these fleeting seconds as I proceeded on my way, I am immediately faced with the difficulty of the writer who is dealing with something more interesting than recorded 'facts' or disjointed impressions. The enigmatic point of truth, glimpsed intuitively

rather than reached by any rational process, continues tantalizingly to defy precise expression. I am aware that some of the meaning I wish to convey could be better expressed by the poet; but that it could not even be hinted at by the pundit.

1

Astors

Englishmen, some sixty years ago, if they thought of America other than in connection with Christopher Columbus, saw it as a raw country. It was a place where the British code of law had just managed to survive, but where English institutions had suffered a setback. It was, presumably, a land of wealth and opportunity; and peopled by savages, cowboys, Irishmen and flamboyant millionaires. Historically it appeared as a nation distinguished as yet only by a few great men, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. The English educated classes knew little about the country or its history. For the most part they assumed there was little to learn. The American War of Independence was seen as a British fiasco, a testament to the incompetence of George III and Lord North. The war between the States, referred to in England as the American Civil War, was seen in a romantic light, as a series of improvised campaigns in which the patrician and traditionally minded society of the South suffered cruelly at the hands of the ruthless and mercenary elements from the North. America in the eyes of Englishmen had a great deal to learn, very little to teach, and anyway, and perhaps fortunately, it was a very long way away.

In the United States at the early part of the twentieth century the Englishman was parodied and caricatured as a chinless, monocled nincompoop who spoke with his mouth full of plums. The satire was deliberate and unkind and was used by my uncle Charles Dana Gibson in his cartoons in *Life* magazine. This caricature had a basis in reality, part of which was the image that it created and the extent to which it was accepted by Americans, rather than the revelation of a new human phenomenon. It was never intended to relate to the more respected Englishmen, men

such as Lord Bryce, the distinguished and learned historian, who represented his government in Washington as ambassador before the First World War, nor to the comparatively few Englishmen who travelled in America with a serious purpose in mind other than matrimony. But it had a connotation and went, side by side, with a certain mystique about the British, particularly on the eastern sea-board. Reverence and hostility, ridicule and respect went hand in hand, varying in flavour and intensity according to different geographical areas, and the origins, history, and traditions of their population.

In the North the wealthy old Yankee families disliked the idea of their British counterparts. This was more true of the men than their women, many of whom found the old English families irresistible. Their dislike was due partly to the fact that, within their own empires, they found themselves following many of the examples of the British ruling class whom they preferred to regard as feudal and outdated. It was also partly due to the fact that they were conscious that their English counterparts, at a time when Britain was the greatest power in the world, regarded them tolerantly and intolerably as *parvenus*. Common bonds, both actual and sentimental, existed between the two nations. And there were many opportunities for misunderstanding and insult.

My grandfather, William Waldorf Astor, who by the turn of the century had become a naturalized British subject, was an American lineal aristocrat. That, at any rate, was how he saw himself and how people in America saw him. His attitude towards his English counterparts was ambivalent. As a young man from the distance of New York he had envied them their cultural heritage and the apparent ease and serenity of their lives. In England there was a leisured class of people whose lives were an extension of their tastes and inclinations: it might be sport, or art or literature or politics—still very much an unprofessional pastime—or a combination of any or all of these. Their position was accepted. In the United States this was not the case. Among educated people there appeared to be no bridge between either being a profes-

sional in a competitive society, or being a playboy. The American man of leisure, certainly in the North, had a less full life than did his counterpart in England; and it was one in which, unlike in England, he did not associate either with the most intelligent or the most interesting of his contemporaries. My grandfather sensed this and envied the older established patrician way of life. He regarded Europe, and England in particular, as a haven for people like himself who respected tradition and the rule of law and order, and who also wished to enjoy, in an untroubled way, the privileges of wealth.

William Waldorf was born in 1848, and, like so many extremely rich men both before and after him whose position in society appears to be assured, he suffered the handicaps of the rich, a state of affairs which the vast majority of people who are not rich are apt to treat with scepticism, as is evidenced by the fact that most of them spend the better part of their lives trying to achieve a position where they can taste of its quality for themselves. He was the great-grandson of a pioneer, one of the remarkable merchant adventurers who, from the humble beginnings of a German immigrant, had built up a vast fortune in trade in the early part of the nineteenth century.

John Jacob Astor, my grandfather's great-grandfather, was born in Waldorf, in Germany, in 1763. His father was a butcher. He was his father's fifth child. The family was Lutheran, and little is known of its antecedents although a mythology persists which claims that the family came from Iberia. John Jacob left his village at the age of sixteen and travelled to London where his brother was already employed by a firm of piano makers, Shudi & Broadwood. In London he learned a kind of basic English and made his first crossing of the Atlantic in November 1783, travelling steerage at a cost to himself of £5, which included not only passage but the ship's ration of salt beef and biscuits, carrying with him a consignment of flutes for trading in North America. The journey from the time of embarking to disembarking, due to gales and icing conditions, took four months; and it was not until the end of March 1784 that he arrived in Baltimore.

John Jacob then proceeded to New York where he first worked for a baker and next for a Mr Robert Bowne, a Quaker fur merchant. He started work as a clerk, and his duties included the treating and packing of the pelts which were brought in from the backwoods of New York State. On the eastern sea-board furs had at one time been treated as currency, and although by the end of the eighteenth century this no longer applied, the woods of North America and Canada were rich in furs which were trapped, mostly by the Indians, and sold for large profits in the European market. The furs were of every description, the large trade in beaver supplying the market for the beaver hat, a form of top hat much in fashion in England. Bowne recognized John Jacob as a young man of unusual ability and sent him up the Hudson river into what was still the country of the Iroquois to negotiate the purchase of skins direct with the trappers.

In 1785 John Jacob married Sarah Todd, a lady of Scottish descent, who became his partner in life in the fullest sense. She, and their children, provided the real incentive to his subsequent endeavours. She was the sister-in-law of John Whetten, a ship's captain whom he had met in London before he embarked on his first Atlantic voyage. His next step was to discover everything he could about the fur trade: the quality of different pelts, how they should be treated, how to bargain with the Indians and leave them convinced that they had had the best of the bargain, and with the farmers who were also part-time trappers. He paid what was currently considered good prices for his merchandise and learned a little Indian dialect. On his journeys, conducted on foot and by canoe, he used to carry with him a flute, a totem of his early trading beginnings, which he played for his own pleasure and possibly to effect an easy introduction with the Indians. He became his own master and expanded his trading posts deep into Canada. This was no small feat, particularly as Yankees, of whom admittedly he was not a typical example, were not at that time loved by their Canadian cousins; and his chief competitor, the North-West Fur Company of Montreal (which later became the Hudson's Bay Company), considered in any case that it held a

monopoly in fur trading in this territory. For John Jacob this was a period of intensive work and exploration. As soon as he had consolidated one position he moved on to the next. Soon he was importing the manufactured goods he needed for trading direct from his own agents in London. He was making his reputation as a merchant who would drive a hard bargain but who always saw that his creditors were paid.

John Jacob lived to be eighty-five and became the greatest merchant of his day. His companies, the American Fur Company and the Pacific Fur Company, established trading posts which extended right across the continent. At the mouth of the Columbia river he founded the town of Astoria. His fleet of ships carried him into the tea and silk trade in China and trade of all kinds in Europe. The profits from his ventures he invested in land in New York. His fortune brought him power. He became a director of the Bank of the United States. He founded the New York Public Library. He was a friend of Washington Irvine, and corresponded regularly on business and political matters with President Monroe. When he went to Europe, to see his relations and visit its capitals, he was received in the style of a merchant prince. He bought a villa on the Lake of Geneva which he gave to one of his daughters who married a Swiss national who had the improbable sounding name and title of Count Vincent Rumpff.

John Jacob was shrewd, enterprising and above all tenacious. He concentrated almost entirely on building a fortune, on escaping from the poverty of his childhood and establishing a secure financial position for his family in America. He achieved all this at a time when America was still in the throes of her revolution, when the political life of the country was beginning to take shape. He had little instinct for democracy. He thought primarily in terms of cash, not causes, and in the spirit of his age it is probably true to say that he was a good citizen rather than a good American. He had little appetite for social life. His wife and eight children and a few of their friends provided him with all the company that he really liked. His heir, William Backhouse, married

Margaret, the daughter of General John Armstrong, the American Secretary for War.

John Jacob established the fortune. All the family had to do after that was sit tight (metaphorically speaking) and their wealth increased as the wealth of New York increased. Unlike other subsequent fortunes, such as the Vanderbilt fortune which was made in ships and railways, and the Rockefeller fortune which was made in oil, the ownership of land in New York did not form part of the risk growth of America: and the family was content to let this state of affairs be, and not venture into new and more hazardous enterprises. A heavy Germanic quality, inherited from the male line, coupled with a conscientious form of Lutheran orthodoxy, seemed to have deprived them of a sense of fun. The next two generations, William Backhouse and another John Jacob, did nothing in particular, at any rate nothing of any note. The later John Jacob's brother William married a wife who became 'the' Mrs Astor of New York, the founder of what was known as the Four Hundred, the city's social élite. From what I have read about her I do not think she was a very sympathetic lady, and evidently her husband William did not either, as he spent most of his time in his house up the Hudson river or on his yacht avoiding her company. Their son John Jacob went down in the *Titanic* while returning from Europe with his wife Ava. She was a great beauty and subsequently married Lord Ribblesdale. There is little information to be gleaned about the family at this time. Its members became firmly fixed to their moorings, to their family conventions and to the management of their property: too firmly fixed for their lives to be either adventurous or particularly stimulating. They represented what today would be called 'the establishment' in New York life. Their outlook was of a classical rather than a romantic kind, respecting institutions and constitutions and mistrusting the impulse in man which drives him to break out of his barriers and be guided by instinctive feelings rather than by his traditions and conventions.

My grandfather, William Waldorf, the son of a later John Jacob, was certainly something of an anachronism. The American

Revolution had been principally inspired by a conception of political ideals. America had revolted against the European tradition of a hierarchical society that had gradually emerged out of feudalism. The contemporary American concept of freedom encouraged the greatest possible measure of free enterprise. Any man born a United States citizen could become President of the United States. Or he could become a millionaire. Equality, which he regarded as practically embodied in the Constitution of his country, was a somewhat enigmatic ideal once he came to examine it; but equality of opportunity was a persistent claim in his life. The idea was not in fact quite as radical as a good many Americans thought, but it was an idea uppermost in their minds. Wealth became the insignia of success, and a millionaire became a man to look up to. He was a symbol of success and he was accorded more respect, of a less critical sort, than was his counterpart in England. Because he represented one aspect of an ideal and because, at the same time, his numbers were small, he was soon accorded the title of aristocrat in a society whose traditions were as yet only short lived. At one moment he was being reminded that all men were equal and he was no better than anyone else, and at the next he was being held up as a kind of paragon. In England the same thing did not apply, at least to anything like the same extent. A Member of Parliament, who was probably a considerable landowner and a man of means, would at election time as likely as not find himself lampooned, ridiculed, and pelted with eggs by the mob. He took it as part of the day's play. In Parliament, in country houses, in London clubs, men of standing associated with their peers; and the fact that a man was rich was by no means enough to make him acceptable.

William Waldorf's predicament was heightened by the fact that his family had become practically a dynasty, and his name in New York had a hierarchical ring. In a society which was still coagulating and searching for its identity, to the man in the street the Astor name did not conform to any popular image of what an American was like. Added to which William Waldorf was by temperament extremely remote. As a young man he never

went to college; he was never exposed to the rough and tumble that is met with either in a large family or at a boarding school. He was an only child, educated privately until he went to Columbia Law School. He was taught by tutors: he was sent to Europe to acquire a conventional appreciation of the arts: and he learned not baseball or football or even tennis but, again with tutors, riding, boxing and fencing. The mood of his country was still a pioneer mood, noisy, friendly, combative and competitive. America was looking to the future, convinced of the greatness of her destiny. The pace of life in New York was fast and its music raucous, and he did not take to it at all. And yet he did make an effort to break new ground and take part in the corporate life of the nation. He made an attempt to move away from his moorings, to navigate nearer to the main stream of events; but due to his circumstances, and due to the fact that he lacked the imagination and the flexibility to surmount them, instead of navigating he practically capsized. His journey led him in an unexpected direction, away from the very thing that he set out to find, into a life even more solitary than the one he abandoned.

In 1877, at the age of twenty-nine, William Waldorf took a step out into public life and became a member of the New York State Assembly. State politics were a rough and a corrupt business and most gentlemen who did not want to increase their fortune in this way steered clear of political life. In 1878 he married Mary Dahlgren Paul; and in 1879 he was elected a member of the New York Senate. In the following year he stood for the United States Congress and was nominated, on the Republican ticket, for the Seventh Congressional District. This was a working-class district, traditionally Democratic, and his election was fiercely contested. William Waldorf, who canvassed his district assiduously, struck the somewhat portentous note which is difficult to avoid in political life. 'I am very happy to be called a carpet bagger by my opponent. When I first went to the Assembly three years ago I remarked that I did not go in the interests of any class, but for the city's good. This is my position now. I have as great an interest in the Seventh Congressional District as I have in the

part of the city in which I live.' His opponent was less inhibited and opened in a more contemporary vein by accusing Mr Astor of representing nothing more than 'a landlord aristocracy', and of buying votes. Then there ensued a one-sided slanging match in which my grandfather refused to take any part. The result was that he was defeated, but not by a large margin. *The New York Tribune*, in its comments, was sympathetic to Astor personally: 'It is always dangerous for men of great wealth to expose themselves to the suffrage. The passion of envy is the most deeply planted and the most invidious in the human heart.' *The New York Times*, more ambiguously, reported that he lost '. . . in spite of a personal canvas more suggestive of the electioneering methods of an old fashioned English Borough than a Congressional District in an American city. The moral is that the possessor of an honoured name, of great wealth, of sound ability and of an unexceptional private character, may throw all these advantages away when, at a critical moment in his political career, he forgets what is due to his constituents as well as his own independence and self respect.' *The New York Times* also commented that William Waldorf was too subservient to the party machine at a time when it expressed an especially reactionary outlook on current affairs. My grandfather bitterly expressed his contempt for craven politicians, for voters, for the democratic process which subjected a man of wealth to a mud bath. William Waldorf agreed with his father that democracy was a dreadful farce. What he hated as much as defeat and personal abuse was the publicity. His dislike of publicity became a phobia. He came to think that all public comment on himself was *ipso facto* a form of slight. He was sometimes right in this view, but his assumption was hasty.

In 1882 William Waldorf was appointed United States Minister in Rome. There was something symbolic in this move. He was already a disillusioned man, but also a determined one. He set his mind against the contemporary world which surrounded him and became increasingly preoccupied with the past: not his own past but with his conceptions of an age of former grandeur where a

man such as he could live his life unchallenged, as autocratically as he pleased. He abandoned the American conception of simplicity and asceticism, which was the pattern of many of the older New England families, and chose instead to weave into his life a pattern of formalistic behaviour which fell somewhere between that of a Roman emperor and his idea of an English medieval baron. He started collecting, on an impressive scale; not, of course, the works of the French Impressionists which were the great art of his day, but paintings by Holbein and Clouet, Mabuse and Murillo; Roman marbles, Tudor prayer books, cross-bows, halberds and medieval armour. He also bought the entire balustrade of the Villa Borghese, a beautiful and massive structure in stone, complete with fountains and statues, in all some two hundred yards long which he later had transplanted to England, the one which stands in the Borghese gardens today being a replica of the original.

In 1893 while he was still Minister Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary in Rome, he bought Cliveden, then the country seat of the Duke of Westminster, a large house overlooking the river Thames, built by Barry somewhat in the style of a Roman villa. He added to it balustrades, fountains and statues, and increased its gardens and improved its vistas. In the following year his wife died. This proved a major tragedy to him and his family. In London he rented Lansdowne House, and an office on the Victoria Embankment, and he later bought number 18 Carlton House Terrace. In 1906, when my father married, he gave him Cliveden and went to live at Hever, in Kent, the castle where Anne Boleyn had spent her childhood, on to which he added a large number of rooms and corridors built to resemble, from the outside, a Tudor village. At Hever his landscape gardening was on a magnificent scale and included a large artificial lake and pillars and marbles transplanted from Italy. In 1899 he became a British subject. He was quoted in the American press as saying: 'America is good enough for any man who has to make a livelihood, though why travelled people of independent means should remain there more than a week is not readily to be comprehended.' He showed

another touch of acerbity when he presented to the Royal United Service Museum the battle flag of the United States frigate *Chesapeake* which had been captured by the British during the War of Independence. The American press repaid injury with insult. *Life*, with more restraint, carried a cartoon by Albert Levering showing William Waldorf Astor, Englishman, seated on the promenade deck of a ship, smoking his pipe, supported by a lifebelt stamped with the words 'H.M.S. Britannia'.

For a second time my grandfather made an attempt to play, as he saw it, some part in public life. He bought *The Pall Mall Gazette*. What had once been a Liberal paper would, he decreed, become a Conservative paper. Some of the staff protested so he replaced them with others, and engaged Henry Cust, then a Member of Parliament, to run the paper for him. He divulged to his editor that he wished to contribute certain articles himself. Cust persuaded him that his articles would fit more suitably into a literary magazine, and so he founded one, *The Pall Mall Magazine*, which carried, in its first issue, an essay by him on Madame Récamier. H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling and James Barrie were ometimes contributors to his papers. In 1911 he bought *The Observer* from Lord Northcliffe and handed it over to my father four years later. He wrote a romantic novel called *Valentino*, whose setting he borrowed from the country round Sorrento where he owned a villa. Much of the dialogue is written in the second person singular, and is not assisted by phrases like 'prithee' and 'forsooth' and other expressions which he certainly did not pick up in the Knickerbocker Club. He read most of the classics and a great deal of history, but the literature which he particularly enjoyed was anything touching on the lives of Napoleon Bonaparte or the Borgia family.

In his houses William Waldorf seldom entertained. His musical evenings in London were enhanced by the performances of some of the great European artists of the day, but his weekend parties in the country, planned many months in advance, lacked that sense of *joie de vivre* which the word 'party' is supposed to suggest. Guests were told exactly when to arrive; and when they arrived

they were greeted by a secretary (or by his daughter, my Aunt Pauline, when she was old enough) who showed them their rooms and told them where, and at what time, they would assemble before meals. The rest of the weekend ran according to a schedule, short periods set aside for walking, driving, resting, eating, and finally sleep. When the family was alone, which was usually the case, my Aunt Pauline was made to read to my grandfather aloud at meals, snatches from the lives of his favourite Borgias or accounts of one of Napoleon's campaigns, while he consumed elaborate dishes prepared by his chef. He was an epicure with wine, but with food he was both *gourmand* and *gourmet*. When his daughter was of age William Waldorf gave a ball for her in London. It was a formal and sombre affair. Apart from inviting a few people he knew, he had written to the Bachelors Club asking the secretary to submit him the names of fifty bachelors as eligible guests. His daughter, who had friends of her own, although she saw the funny side of this, also found it a little embarrassing. Cliveden was a court, with governesses, tutors, secretaries and servants in attendance, ruled over with a majestic sense of justice by a lonely autocrat who was obsessed by highly personal notions about convention. Everything in the house ran exactly to time. William Waldorf had a mania about punctuality. The carriages in his stables were painted chocolate brown, the identical colour which, until then, had been used almost exclusively by the English royal family. The carriages, and their liveried attendants, came round to the front door precisely at the hour ordered, not a minute early and not a minute late. The whole of the household had to comply with his idiosyncrasies.

In this chilly, sombre atmosphere William Waldorf's children—my father, my Uncle John and my Aunt Pauline—were brought up, instructed, but not educated in the ways of life. They gave their father little cause to complain. His daughter was a model of unselfishness and had many admirers, and his sons worked hard at their studies and were distinguished in the athletic life of their schools. William Waldorf seldom consulted his children or in-

vited their opinions; and when he did they had to be careful and considered in their replies. A child, in his view, was allowed to change his mind once: but it was inexcusable, even for a child, to change his mind a second time. William Waldorf's sons were quiet and modest and showed a dislike of anything they regarded as pretentious. When they grew up they displayed a dedicated sense of public service, which they had not detected in their parent. My father, alone of the children, did what perhaps, at times, they had all wanted to do. One day, in trying to find his own place in the world, he revolted against his father's standards, and turned round and told his parent that he, together with his antiquated notions, could go to hell.

In 1916 William Waldorf was made a peer, for political and public services, an ambiguous phrase which is still employed in the bestowal of honours. What this phrase often means, and what in this case it meant, was that the gentleman to be ennobled had contributed handsomely both to philanthropic causes and, more particularly, to the political funds of the party in power. William Waldorf had qualified on both these scores. There was plenty of precedence for purchasing a title. It had been done before and was to be done many times again. William Waldorf, without showing any marked propensities for public service, acquired two titles. He was made a baron one year, and a viscount the next. Had his great-grandfather made his fortune in England rather than America he would, no doubt, have found himself inheriting a position in the House of Lords. Since this was not the case he felt he had to make up for lost ground, and government, for its part, was merely conforming to the well-practised and cynical custom which, on both sides of the Atlantic, with its own variations, helped to keep the political party machines lubricated. At the age of sixty-eight William Waldorf found himself, at last, a baron living in a medieval castle. And almost immediately the gilt was removed from this piece of gingerbread. My father, far from being pleased with the arrangement, thought the idea ridiculous, and told him so. My father was a Member of Parliament at the time and this step taken by his father certainly prejudiced

his political career. Strong words and many letters passed between them, and the upshot was that my father was excommunicated. It was a little late in the day for William Waldorf to cut his eldest son off financially; but he made provisions to leave the residue of his fortune to his other children, and to his grandchildren, and vowed that he would never speak to his eldest son again. The inevitable struggle, for so long smouldering under the surface, had at last erupted.

Sir Harold Nicolson, who knew William Waldorf, has described him to me as the shyest man he ever met. In old age he became preoccupied in discovering his family's genealogy, and he was responsible for the myth that the Astors were originally Spaniards, and not just *pueblo* but Spaniards of the nobility. There is no shred of anything that can properly be called evidence to support this claim; but the notion was symbolic, and in discovering the nature of this strange man it is important to pay some attention to symbolism. If he had a choice, if language had presented no barrier, I think he would have liked to have been a Spaniard, and certainly a grandee which in a sense he already was. In the old world there was no more backward country than Spain, no country so cut off from the feeling and fashion of the twentieth century. In politics and outlook he would have made the late Cardinal Segura, Bishop of Seville, the most reactionary prelate of his age, look like an evangelist. The fact of the matter is that William Waldorf never found out what it was that he wanted. It is misleading to assume that because a man sets out to acquire certain things, and shows great tenacity in doing so, that he knows what he is really after. Our lives are never quite as simple as on the surface they appear. His dilemma was made the worse by having no one with whom to share it. He experienced the extremes of loneliness, the lack of contact with people without which it is not possible to enjoy the compensations of solitude.

When my Uncle John lost his leg in the war my grandfather, for the second time in his life, moved out of the house he was living in and handed over Hever to him and went to live in a Regency house in Brighton. Here he spent his remaining years

alone, living quite austerely. He had never gloried in ostentation. What he had strived to do all his life was to live in style, evocative of a classically moulded tradition. Where he had no roots he had attempted, assiduously, to create some. In bringing his family across the Atlantic he had, in a sense, been pioneering. It had been a difficult row to furrow, and his children, not he, would reap the benefits. Many of the things he had set out to do had been constructive in character. But he had made no intimate friends, and only a few acquaintances. His remoteness, his lack of tact, his awkwardness, and his sense of disillusionment were symptoms of his total inability to communicate with other people. Looking back on it his life had been a perfect hell. Since his wife died he had met nobody who could fully appreciate this.

Even in the moment of death my grandfather was cheated of any classical sense of the occasion. He died, in 1919: not in bed, nor in any of his large houses, surrounded by the results of his endeavours, but in a house in Brighton, imprisoned behind the locked doors of his lavatory.

To my mother William Waldorf had confessed: 'I die many deaths every day.' His portrait hung in the passage of the wing at Cliveden. As a boy I sometimes stopped and stared at it to try to discover what he was like. Could those stern features break into a smile? Did they carry a suggestion of love, or humour, or even anguish? The artist who painted it did not reveal much, either of himself or his subject. My grandfather was dead. That much I knew about him. But had he really lived, except in the technical sense given to life by the physicians? I felt I could have told him something, given him something, I did not know quite what. But would he have listened? And if he had listened would he have understood? My grandfather, staring out of the canvas, remained an awesome figure. I regarded the face of authority with misgiving.

2

Mr Langhorne's Circus

If in North America I were to search for an ingredient to offset the stern and inflexible Astor quality, which reached its meridian in the person of William Waldorf, I would have to look far, within the community of Anglo-Saxon origin, to find a stronger contrast than my maternal grandfather, Mr Chiswell Dabney Langhorne. The contrast was not only the difference between Yankee and Confederate, or that of a man who had always experienced material security as against one who was brought up to enjoy hazard; it was a difference of temperament and aptitude. Whereas Mr Astor was tall, Mr Langhorne was short and stocky. Mr Astor fixed people with a cold and fish-like stare: Mr Langhorne met their glance with an apprising and friendly inspection. One was restrained: the other ebullient. Mr Astor could not get along with people; and Mr Langhorne could not get along without them. What they shared in common was a determination always, and despite any conditions, to get their own way.

About the genealogy of the Langhornes I do not know a great deal, other than that the family had been established in Virginia for some two hundred years. There hangs round it a thin veil of mythology, of a castle in Wales and a Member of Parliament in Westminster which, for all I know, may not be mythology. There was a Jones and a Keene, some Welsh blood and some Irish. In the case of the Langhornes, genealogy does not really signify. As far as his relatives were concerned Mr Langhorne was the universal provider and fixer of situations and, like the Almighty, they might have applied to him the quotation from St John's Gospel, 'Before Abraham was, I am.'

Mr Langhorne was born in 1843 and the Civil War ended in 1865. He emerged from it with two children, having married

Nancy Witcher Keene when she was sixteen; and, like most people in the South, he was penniless. The world of the Southern planter had disappeared in flames. This situation evidently found Mr Langhorne undaunted and ready to turn his hand to anything. His impulse was to enjoy life, but first he had to make his family secure financially. He knew what poverty was like and he later taught his children that it had no charms, and little merit.

To start with Mr Langhorne took on any job that came to hand; night porter in a hotel and, more in accord with his temperament, tobacco auctioneer, where the full force of his personality gave his performance an entertainment value of its own. These auctions were called 'tobacco breaks', the tobacco being piled in small heaps and in rows on the floor of the warehouse, the auctioneer selling each pile at great speed. Mr Langhorne became adept at this. He found he could make a living in this way; but it still did not provide him with the opening that he needed. To augment his income as a tobacco auctioneer he devised a system of private auctions of his own. Before each tobacco sale he bought up all the farm implements, wheelbarrows, and odd pieces of furniture that he could lay his hands on; and he hired a barrel organ and a coloured man to wind it. As soon as the tobacco sale was finished the barrel organ, parked at the door of the warehouse, would break into song to hold the attention of the crowd and Mr Langhorne would start a private auction on his own account. He was determined, one way or another, to get ahead of the game.

Once a man is ready to make the best of an opportunity he usually does not have to wait long to be given his chance. My grandfather Langhorne was a convivial man to meet and his opportunity came when he met a General Douglas, a Northerner, who had acquired the concession to build a railway in Virginia. The General knew nothing about handling Negro labour. Mr Langhorne saw that he could provide him with just the experience he needed. He knew nothing about railways, and had never tried his hand at contracting, but he persuaded Douglas to give him the contracting job. This was the opportunity, which he seized. He did the job well, and made out of it a modest fortune;

after which he was able to establish his family in some style. He bought Mirador, a delightful red-brick Neo-Georgian house near Charlotsville, and the property which it stood in, and he settled down to enjoy the less onerous duties of managing his own estate, managing his family and, more particularly, enjoying the company of his neighbours and friends. His estate and his affairs prospered and his family grew. The stables filled with horses, there was a pack of foxhounds in the district and a little rough shooting. His family were brought up to enjoy the traditional Virginian pleasures of a country life. About his career as a contractor my grandfather had a philosophy which went something like this: 'If you are going into the railway construction business the thing to concentrate on is getting the right terms in the contract. All you need for this is personality. Once you have arranged the contract it is easy to find some damn-fool, who likes hard work, to build the railway.'

My grandfather Langhorne's life-long passion was playing poker. It provided for him a constant source of pleasure and a reasonably constant source of income. A friend of his was once accused by his wife of returning home in the early hours of the morning with the stains of tobacco juice all down his shirt front. His explanation, which his wife accepted as reasonable, was that he had stayed up all night playing cards with Chillie Langhorne and he had not had time to turn his head away from the table in order to spit.

Whereas Mr Langhorne was a warmer and more human character than William Waldorf, his personality is almost harder to fix. From New York there comes a discreet silence, or at best a note of modest restraint, interrupted only occasionally by the indiscretions of a man who was finding his life frustrated at every point. There is, nevertheless, a certain quiet dignity surrounding the life of the Astor estate. From Virginia there is the noise of a circus, and the central figure is of a ring-master. The cacophony is such, and the stories surrounding the family have become so gilded with time, that it is nearly impossible in terms of biography to recast its characters or their setting. To the eye of some

visitors the Langhorne household, despite the feeling of continual movement that it conveyed, was like an enchanted garden in which everything appeared to have a lyrical and unexpected quality. The atmosphere was friendly and the talk spontaneous. The turbulence, of which there was a good deal, was usually kept out of sight, or treated in a colloquial way which gave it a semblance of badinage, helped along by a cross-fire of wit. The visitors were invariably attracted, sometimes bewildered, and occasionally bewitched.

Mr Langhorne was the central figure, and his was the predominant influence, in the lives of his children and those of his grandchildren who were old enough to know him. All his children, including his daughters, addressed him as 'sir'. They shared his high spirits, his sociability and the pleasure he took in seeing himself and other people in a humorous and somewhat exaggerated light, never allowing himself or his family to take themselves too seriously. He was the cock of the roost and no respecter of persons, and his family learnt not to stand and argue with him. Mr Langhorne gave his children a strong sense of family, one which continued with them all their lives. They, in the next generation, spread their wings in many directions.

Mr and Mrs Langhorne had eleven children of whom eight survived to grow up. Of these eight, five were girls and three were boys. The girls turned out to be more ambitious than the boys. Lizzie, the eldest daughter, married Moncure Perkins and settled in the neighbourhood. Lizzie never took part in the social life of New York. She married before the Langhorne family had properly found its feet and as a result of this, as her younger sisters grew up, she came to feel that she had been deprived of partaking in the pleasures of a more exciting world than the one that the neighbourhood provided, a more cosmopolitan world in which her younger sisters were enjoying a wild success. The parochial life was not one that could properly contain any of Mr Langhorne's daughters and Lizzie did not like feeling provincial, or being reminded of it by her family. But if Lizzie Perkins never succeeded in moving out of the neighbourhood

there were compensations to be had in the life that centred round Mirador and Mr Langhorne's circle of friends, and her two daughters demonstrated that they could succeed in the more sophisticated world in which their mother had never competed. Nancy, her eldest, good-looking and unusually gifted, married Henry Marshall Field and went to New York. Henry Field died young and she then married Ronald Tree, a relation of the Fields, and lived resplendently in England. Later, after a third not altogether happy marriage, she settled at Haseley Court in Oxfordshire and made of the house and its garden a work of art, a living memorial to her sense of style and taste. From the roof of Haseley today flies the Confederate flag, a fluttering tribute to Mr Langhorne and his spirit of hope and defiance. Mr and Mrs Langhorne never enjoyed their grand-daughter's sophisticated taste: but its feeling of style and period and comfort came out of Mirador. This same feeling was reflected in the homes of all his children, and carried with it a sense of neighbourliness and generosity. Mr Langhorne's second grand-daughter, Alice, married Reginald Winn and swelled the number of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren who were born and brought up in England.

Irene, the second of Mr Langhorne's daughters, married Charles Dana Gibson, an artist, and went to live in New York. He was a large man, with a massive dome of a head, and had studied art in Paris and later became famous in America for his black and white drawings and cartoons. He created the 'Gibson girl', the stylized American beauty, elegant, swan-necked, well bosomed, with a wasp waist and a proud and beckoning look. She resembled his wife Irene. The fact that Dana Gibson was strong and phlegmatic, and also possessed the eye of an artist, perhaps made him the ideal husband for anything as capricious as a Langhorne daughter. Like his father-in-law, Dana Gibson disliked and ridiculed anything he thought pretentious. His cartoons of fops, wearing monocles and carrying black lacquer canes; of little hen-pecked husbands, uncomfortable in evening rails; of large, formidable, fleshy women balancing tea-cups,

were intended to ridicule the antics of ladies, and even more pointedly their husbands, who set their hearts on climbing into society. About his art, which relied mainly on a natural talent, a quickness of eye and firm lineal execution, he was extremely modest. About his wife he was both loving and philosophical. All the Langhorne sisters, whether they acknowledged it or not, attracted men like flies, different kinds of men for different kinds of reasons. They all had a great many admirers when they were young and continued to have admirers well into old age. Irene probably had more than any and did most to encourage them, being not only a famous beauty of her day but also, in New York, the doyen of the Southern belles, exercising in that position the same rights and inspiring much the same feelings as Queen Mary exercised over the cadet branches of the Royal Family in London. She was, too, a great snob, in the grand manner, putatively admired by czars and emperors, and actually, if signed and framed photographs carry any meaning, the friend of contemporary czars on both sides of the Atlantic. Uncle Dana took this not too seriously. He loved her gaiety and allowed her to indulge her fancy. She once had an admirer who was deaf, and after this he suggested to his brothers-in-law that they first made sure that their wives' admirers were deaf. You could, he suggested, then stay comfortably in the bedroom and hear everything that was going on downstairs. And, as he put it, if you have a canary you must let it sing.

Mr Langhorne's third daughter, Nancy, was as pretty to look at as Irene. Her small, firmer, more acquiline features, which conveyed a feeling of vitality and strength, also revealed an epicene quality that was not evident in any of her sisters. In a family that was not conspicuously religious she had read the Bible, from beginning to end, by the time she was fifteen. Religion was not her only preoccupation. She loved to ride and play games and, surprisingly for a girl of her generation, she played competitively at squash racquets in the court Mr Langhorne had built in the garden, defeating most of his friends and those of her suitors who were intrepid enough to challenge her. She had, too, unusual

gifts of mimicry, and was the only child who showed an inclination to challenge her father's authority.

At the age of seventeen Nancy married Robert Shaw, a member of an old Boston family. Robert Shaw was not an intellectual, nor was he a particularly perceptive sort of man. He was good-looking, wealthy, agreeable and, above all, easy going. He supposed he was marrying a typical Southern belle. He woke up from his reverie with the surprise of a man who had unsuspectingly got into bed with a wild cat. On the second night of their honeymoon his young bride left him and ran back to Mirador. Mr Langhorne tried to comfort his daughter, and allowed her to stay a few days, after which he sent her back telling her she had better go through with it. By this marriage she had one child, Bobbie, named after his father. Two years later Robert Shaw was divorced. Mr Langhorne's third daughter married my father, the eldest son of William Waldorf, and lived in England.

Phyllis, the daughter next in age, first married Reginald Brooks. They had two sons, but Phyllis subsequently divorced her husband and later married Robert Brand. He and my father had been friends at Oxford together, and it was through this friendship that he came to meet his wife. Robert Brand was a Fellow of All Souls and one of the young men who, after the Boer War, worked under Lord Milner, trying to carry into effect the new constitution governing the Union of South Africa. In 1909 when he returned from South Africa he met Nancy Astor for the first time. In the words of my Uncle Bob (as he came to be): 'Not content even then with having conquered the top social world in London, which she found too easy, she wanted to get in touch with the young people who seemed to be interested in serious affairs.' He was a scholarly young man with little experience of sophisticated life, and he was surprised to find in her a combination of beauty, frankness, friendliness, wit and initiative, qualities he associated more with the faster social set of his generation than with someone who, as he discovered, had deep religious and moral principles. Her instinct and intuitive powers he found uncanny: her generosity quite spontaneous: her reflective powers consider-

ably less pronounced. He discovered all this; and he discovered he was falling in love.

Four years later, in 1913, my Uncle Bob went to the United States on business, and before leaving New York he called on Irene and Dana Gibson. There he met Phyllis, and cancelling other engagements he accompanied her back to Mirador. After a few days he discovered he was falling in love again. He loved my Aunt Phyllis for the rest of her life. She, who had other suitors, kept him waiting before she finally made up her mind. It was another five years before they married.

The youngest of Mr Langhorne's daughters was Norah, the gentlest, the most romantically inclined and the least premeditating of all the sisters. Norah's weakness was for falling in love in a somewhat haphazard fashion. On one occasion she found herself engaged to be married to two suitors at the same time, having convinced herself that she was in love with both of them. She later married Paul Phipps, an Englishman with a quiet, humorous manner, who had just qualified professionally as an architect. They lived happily in London and had two children. Their son Tommy, when he grew up, returned to America to live; and their daughter, Joyce Grenfell, made her reputation on the London stage. Aunt Norah subsequently ran away with, and married, Maurice Flynn, a handsome giant of a man who, out of college, had been an all-American football player and earned the nickname of Lefty. He was one of the early stars of 'Westerns' in the days of silent films. Had he not preferred drinking whisky and amusing his friends to any form of regular employment, and had he not remained all his life a friendly and kindly Irish collegiate, he might have made a career as an actor. Norah and he were happy for a number of years. She gently persuaded him to stop his drinking; but one day he walked out of the door and did not return and went off and married someone else.

Of Mr Langhorne's three sons, Keene and Harry, the oldest, turned out to be intelligent, versatile, idle and wild. They were intimidated by their father, and they both developed an overpowering attachment to the bottle. They married, they made

friends, but they made little else of their lives. Buck, the youngest of the Langhorne sons, was the only Virginian uncle I ever met. When I stayed with him in his house near Mirador in 1938 I found him a lovable man with an easy-going gift for life and no great wish to express it other than in the company of his friends. I was attracted by his confidential manner that stopped short of intruding into other people's affairs, a trait which was a little exceptional among the Langhornes. He seemed content to live, and to be, and carried inside him no illusions of epic quality. As a young man he used to discuss in general terms what it was that he intended to do with his life, in a manner which made it clear that ambition was something that could not conceivably apply to himself. Once, unexpectedly, he stood for the State legislature, but his method of campaigning was not conducive to winning many votes. In the course of the campaign he was asked to express his views on taxation. His answer showed a tolerance which cannot have been synchronized to a party machine, and an evasiveness which outdid the replies expected even of a seasoned veteran of politics. 'Well now,' answered Uncle Buck, in accents which were indistinguishable from those of a Southern Negro, 'Well now, taxation is a problem that everyone has to decide for himself.' In the end he chose a country life, owning, and in a sense farming, some property, and paying frequent and irregular visits to his friends. Coloured men in the neighbourhood who were in difficulties would turn to him for help in the same way as their fathers had turned to old Mr Langhorne. His butler, Clint, immaculate and beaming in a white jacket, seemed to me just as much a slave as most of his forebears before Abolition. When Uncle Buck stayed away too long Clint would call him on the telephone and ask him to come home. The absence of his master from the house made him feel lost. 'That coloured boy's just like another child 'cept he eats more. If I tell him to go butt his head against a wall, first thing I know he'll do it.'

My mother and Aunt Phyllis loved Buck, but they would never treat him seriously and when they met he became a target for their jokes. Although Uncle Buck was a married man with several

children when I knew him, the two sisters treated him as they had remembered him as a boy. He became associated in their minds with a kind of white Negro, a friendly hay-seed who would inevitably have his pocket picked if he ventured into the city. In conversation they would deliberately draw him out on world affairs, on matters well beyond his competence. When I last saw him at Cliveden, and the teasing went too far, he protested: 'I declare for goodness, Nannie, you oughtn't to say that about me.' He was, I thought, dead right.

This, outlined very briefly, was the galaxy of children who made up the Langhorne household, first at Danville where my mother was born in 1879, and later at Mirador.

One man of my acquaintance, Angus McDonnell, was an eye-witness to the Langhorne family when they were still living at Mirador. He lived there with them and worked for Mr Langhorne while he was still building the railway. Angus McDonnell was an Irishman, a younger son of the Earl of Antrim, and he had gone to America partly for the adventure of travelling and seeing the world, and partly with the idea of finding work as an engineer. He found his way to Mirador not, primarily, because he was looking for a job but because he had met, for a fleeting instant, Mr Langhorne's daughter Nancy in New York; and having met her he became set on renewing the acquaintance. His first encounter with my mother was when he went to see his mother off on the boat to Europe. Lady Antrim had been told to look out for Nancy Shaw, who had been recommended to her as a delightful companion for the journey, and who was travelling to Europe accompanied by her mother. They were making the journey in order to see new sights, and to recuperate from the effects of my mother's recent divorce from Robert Shaw. At the quayside Lady Antrim came to the rail of the ship to say a final farewell, accompanied by, to use Angus's words, 'the most attractive young woman you could wish to see, with laughing blue eyes, generally

blonde colouring, and the neatest trimmest figure imaginable, looking gay and excited at the prospect of visiting Europe for the first time, carrying a large bunch of red roses that one of her "beaux" had sent her to the boat. My mother introduced us, and much to my confusion and the delight of the passengers and those who had come to see them off, Nannie threw her roses to me saying she would look forward to seeing me on her return to Virginia in the early summer. Later, when I got to know her well, I realized the rose episode was typical of her: she always liked being the centre of the stage, even if it was a small one, and even if, in so being, she made others feel self-conscious. On this occasion, though I remember feeling miserably shy and foolish holding a great bunch of red roses, I also remember hoping that she would come home soon.'

When Nancy returned from Europe Angus McDonnell had found work with the Southern Railway at Manassas and he was soon invited to Mirador for the weekend. He possessed at that time one respectable suit—or, as he described it, one semi-respectable suit—of blue serge which was unfortunately shiny at the seams and elbows and high-lighted by a number of grease-spots. He hired a buggy to make the eighteen-mile journey to Mirador. In those days there were only dirt roads, which gave the impression of bottomless mud in winter and bottomless dust in summer. It was a fine summer's day and he arrived feeling hot and shy and with a tongue as dry as a parrot's. He was covered in dust from head to foot, the family were sitting out on the lawn looking cool and fresh under the shade of a large tree, and for a moment he felt both conspicuous and a total stranger. His shyness was immediately dispelled by the feeling of friendliness and informality which greeted him. Mr Langhorne he found to be good-looking, a man about sixty years of age, with a white moustache and a forceful, humorous face. Norah, aged sixteen and utterly feminine, could dispel shyness in a child or an octogenarian. Mrs Langhorne, whom he reckoned had once been good-looking, was of a more passive nature than her husband and seemed to fulfil the role of peacemaker in this high-spirited household. He found

Keene engaging company; but he disliked Harry from the first time he saw him. Buck had about him an easy and unassuming friendliness and Nancy, to his eyes the most enchanting of them all, gave him the kind of welcome which only she could dispense, making him feel at once accepted. When he came to leave Angus experienced for a fleeting moment the embarrassment of his first arrival. Mr Langhorne bid him goodbye: 'Glad to have you here and come again some time.' 'Yes, sir,' replied Angus, 'I will come again next Sunday.' 'Well,' answered Mr Langhorne, 'I didn't quite mean that'; but then added: 'Come any time, whenever you feel like it.'

'On looking back, I really don't remember any transitional stage between being a visitor, and moving in as one of the family and as such establishing myself in a room that I shared with Buck, and the old pointer Bob, and the desk in the corner which gave the room the title of "office". It seemed that the whole family was prepared to accept me on the recommendation of Nannie [Nancy] and her mother, because my mother had taken such a fancy to them both when they had travelled home together. Nannie and her father were of the same pattern, and it was clear to me from the first moment I saw her at Mirador that just as he, as a young man, had fought his way to prosperity, so she, having had a taste of what New York, Boston and Bar Harbour had to offer—and her first experience of England and Europe proving preferable to any of these—would not be content to remain long under the parental roof in Virginia, but was merely treating Mirador as a base headquarters for herself and her little boy from which to plan an invasion of Europe. She was never lacking in courage or determination, whether riding a horse at a fence or meeting any other challenge. Unfortunately Mrs Langhorne died a few months after returning from Europe, and this came as a bad blow to the family. She it was who used to pour oil on the troubled waters, and the family waters were often troubled. In the role of peacemaker Irene was the only other person who could take her mother's place, and when family rows looked like getting out of control Mr Langhorne would send for her. Nannie, after her

mother's death, kept house rather sporadically for Mr Langhorne for the next two years, but it was not altogether a success. They were both forceful personalities, too much alike in character, except that when Mr Langhorne set himself a goal he proved a good judge of his own capacities, whereas it always seemed to me that Nannie set herself targets beyond her capacity, and she never seemed satisfied when she had got as far as her delightful appearance, her great charm, her nimble wits and her somewhat limited education would take her.' That, in his own words, is Angus's impression of the Langhorne family at Mirador. When I was a child my mother used to tell me with pride: 'I was a born fighter. We were all brought up to fight.'

Angus McDonnell made a lasting friend of Mr Langhorne. He loved his generosity, his geniality and his jokes, and he enjoyed his forthright barnstorming ways. Mirador reminded him in many ways of Ireland. He found there the same friendliness and much the same relationship between master and man. The coloured servants, like the Irish servants, had solved the problem of showing affection to their employers without being familiar or impertinent; and the 'white folks' had an equal feeling of affection for the coloured 'help', and knew how to get the best out of them by laughing with them and, when they judged necessary, laughing at them. His only disappointment was that Nancy Shaw did not treat his proposals of marriage seriously, but later, when he saw the pace at which her life was moving, he did not even regret that.

My mother married my father in 1906 and grandfather Langhorne paid one visit to Cliveden when William Waldorf was still living there. These two totally dissimilar men met, but I never heard how they got on or what impression they made on each other. They were both laws unto themselves and this, and the insistence of conformity on the part of one and the lack of it on the part of the other, were brought out in a story told me by Ben Cooper, the gamekeeper. William Waldorf organized a day's shooting and in those days, although Cliveden was never much of a shoot, a good many pheasants were reared for the purpose. At lunch time Mr Langhorne announced that he had had a good

morning and had killed enough birds for one day and would not be coming out in the afternoon. However the next morning, finding himself with nothing to do, unknown to his host he visited Cooper, told him to get his gun and a couple of dogs because they were going to shoot a few more pheasants. An infringement of hospitality perhaps; and a certain unconcern for the Astor sense of convention which his daughter, despite her affection and admiration for my father, was to show over the years.

1266645

When my mother left Virginia to live in England she took with her much of its feelings and tradition as part of her background and armoury. Much of the tradition stemmed originally from England. Virginia was founded as a crown colony at the beginning of the seventeenth century after an abortive attempt by Sir Walter Raleigh at founding a settlement there is 1585. The early settlers were English country gentry who formed themselves into an aristocracy very much on English lines, owning large estates, deriving their wealth from the land—in their case from growing tobacco and cotton—living in large houses a life of grace and ease. It was a society which set great store by chivalry and codes of behaviour. Like the English its members respected the values of a rural aristocracy: they despised the life of trade and industry, they accorded a special place to the arts and learning, and they attempted and achieved little in the way of science and literature. It had virtually no middle class—a man was either gentry or poor white trash, a form of pariah rated rather lower than the Negroes. The basis of the planters' wealth was Negro slave labour, and here the planters' attitudes were either patrician or inhumane, varying according to individuals. Their society was intolerantly Church of England but it was spared, socially speaking, the cold and fanatical views of the Calvinists who had settled in Massachusetts. Virginia, too, had a great political history, producing the first three Presidents of the Federated States, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. The Virginia gentry regarded themselves as of the best, less imposing and powerful than their English counterparts

but also, in their view, less proud and oppressive, superior in every way to Yankees who were hard, pushing, grabbing industrialists, unversed in the refinements or arts of enjoying life.

The Civil War destroyed the South, its wealth, its plantations, its society; but the ethic and the tradition lived on. Mr Langhorne was not, as far as I have been able to discover, either a wealthy planter (he was in any case only seventeen when the Civil War started) or the son of a large landowner: nor was this notion of his antecedence ever fostered in the Langhorne family. His father was a gentleman of modest means. Unlike traditional landed aristocracy, who had enjoyed the best that wealth and position accorded, he never leaned towards the view of *après moi le deluge*. When his world collapsed he set about restoring it with vigour and gusto into a pattern which approximated traditionally to the standards of the past. His approach was empirical, opportunist, and admirably suited to his aims. It carried with it a sense of ease, good living and hospitality, a constant thread in Virginian life, which remained conservative, sceptical of foreigners—especially Latins—bigoted towards Roman Catholics, and conscious of its early English origins.

In 1882 William Waldorf, educated partly abroad, might reasonably cast glances back at Europe. New York had, since it was founded, been an international port looking to Europe for its trade. During the War of Independence New York had been a community of divided loyalties, which mustered more regiments to fight for George III than for the cause of the insurgents. He and his forebears were urban landlords who shared none of the passionate and strongly rooted feelings for land, and with it a way of life, which was the Virginian heritage. This city, the city of which his forebears were among the founder-owners, had increased in wealth and size as a result of a vast influx of Italian, Irish, Polish and German immigrants, the new citizens of the new world who produced the manpower and the initiative on which its economy came to depend. There was no single thread of tradition, constituting part of its indigenous life, to which he could cling. Mr Langhorne, on the other hand, had become an essential part

of his society. The life he made for his family was in the pattern of a tradition, a tradition which, although not strong enough to retain his daughters geographically, contained them in other ways, and fortified their views on life and behaviour wherever they went.

3

Fusion

In 1904 my mother made her second journey to England. She had, after her divorce from Robert Shaw, acquired the custody of their child Bobbie; and despite the excitement and vicissitudes of the next few years he continued to occupy the central place in her affections. On this trip to England my mother was accompanied by her sister Phyllis, and together they rented a hunting box in Market Harborough, then the most fashionable centre of the most traditionally fashionable sport. For both of them hunting was no new venture; they had been brought up on horses, and riding to hounds in Leicestershire, the best hunting country in the world, was a dream which, when realized, became practically an idolatry. They both rode well and were apparently fearless, and although my mother gave up fox-hunting shortly after she married my father, my Aunt Wiss kept it up until the day she died. One of my mother's earliest friends in Leicestershire, who later became my godmother, was Edith Cunard, the wife of Sir Gordon Cunard. Granny Cunard, which was what I called her, was Irish, and had a lively mind and will of her own. According to her son Victor, who was a friend of both my mother's and mine and who left me certain papers about my parents, she found her Northamptonshire and Leicestershire neighbours lacking in that zest and spontaneity of life which she possessed and which she hoped to find reciprocated in other people. In her view the hunting set was either respectable and dull, or else its members were fast and downright immoral, and in neither case did they comply with her tastes. This alone was enough to bring her and my mother together. Granny Cunard was, however, sufficiently of her class and generation to be slightly suspicious of foreigners,

particularly if they were young, dazzlingly pretty, and apparently unattached. Their first meeting was typical of them both.

Granny Cunard opened by saying: 'I suppose you've come over to England to take one of our husbands away from us,' and Mrs Shaw answered: 'If you knew what difficulty I had getting rid of my first one, you wouldn't say that.' After this rather tart exchange of civilities they came to know each other better and their friendship was soon established on an unassailable foundation of mutual understanding. Neither of them did things by halves, and it was not long before their loyalty to, and affection for, each other were extended to embrace the members of their respective families.

Victor Cunard wrote me the following account of my mother's early years in England.

'Although it would be impossible for me to remember at first hand the impact this lovely stranger made on our neighbours round Market Harborough, she became the heroine of so many and such oft repeated stories that I feel I lived through those months as a grown up, rather than as a curious and slightly precocious child. She not only "went well" across country and scrupulously observed the complicated conventions of the hunting field, she was also an experienced rider who could be trusted not to ruin a fine horse. She was a good mixer—as the rather bald phrase went—and her conversation was never above people's heads but was so amusing that her presence would insure the success of the dullest dinner party. Without her, some of those dinners, if my parents were to be believed, could be very dull indeed.

'Market Harborough had, no doubt, received hard riding and entertaining visitors before, but what made Mrs Shaw different from the common run, were her shining candour and almost Puritanical respectability. Except for the unusual frankness of some of her remarks, she furnished no pretext for the slightest breath of criticism. Eligible suitors she no doubt had, and some would-be followers with less honourable intentions, but the former were treated with a discretion worthy of Penelope, while the latter soon smarted under the painful lash of her ridicule. She

was not only gay but good and it was this, I am sure, that made my parents take her so directly to their hearts and prepared them, and others like them, to protect her from any possible asperities she might have found in a strange land.

'She was not long, however, in need of friendly solicitude or advice for, within a couple of years of her arrival in England, she married Mr Waldorf Astor. If anybody was foolish enough to suppose that this change in circumstances would make the new Mrs Astor forget her first English friends they must soon have seen their mistake. The exchange of Highfield—as the red brick box on the Bowden Road was called—and Claridges, for Cliveden and St James's Square merely meant, as far as my brothers and I were concerned, the sudden enlargement of our range of experience.

'We had known, since we could remember, the country houses of our numerous uncles and aunts. Solid, comfortable, prosperous places where, according to the part of the country in which they were situated and the season of the year, the all absorbing occupations of hunting, shooting and fishing were seriously pursued. London was almost unknown to us and the Great World of which we sometimes, even then, caught glimpses in the illustrated papers, was far beyond our ken. Now, although we could not, we were reminded, ever belong to it, we were often to visit this legendary land that seemed to be enjoying an endless golden age.

'It had been firmly impressed on us that worldliness and snobbishness were the besetting sins of all those who did not lead a quiet country life devoted to sport and local affairs, but in the vast rooms of 4 St James's Square and amongst the gardens and woods of Cliveden it was recognized that High Society had somehow lost its wickedness and the dangers it held for the young had been exorcised. This miracle had been brought about by a conjunction, as rare surely as that between heavenly bodies of great magnitude, of two outstandingly remarkable people. In trying to recapture the feeling of those early visits the figure of Nancy Astor comes more vividly and easily to mind than that of her husband. The exuberance of her vitality and the lightning play

of her wit tended to obscure—at least for the immature and inexperienced observer—the gentle and reserved presence of the master of the house. But this modest and unassuming man, with his integrity and devotion to the welfare of humanity, contributed quite as much as his young wife to the creation of that atmosphere which their friends found so delightful to breathe. Superficially their temperaments seemed widely divergent, but the deep religious conviction and the uncompromising sense of duty which they shared made their respective virtues complement one another rather than cancel each other out.

'Cliveden and St James's Square became, under this happy dispensation, the ideal surroundings in which to make a first contact with the world, and my visits to one or the other during my school years remain amongst the happiest of my early memories. There was nothing austere about the life one saw either in London or on the banks of the Thames, indeed everything seemed devised for gaiety and enjoyment and for a reasonable indulgence in such sensual pleasures as are provided by games, good food and bodily comfort. Small provision, it is true, was made for purely aesthetic or intellectual delights, and frivolous gossip was rarely heard, but with Nancy Astor at the end of the table, the most unpromising conversation could not become ponderous, and pomposity was unable to survive. One felt, even at that early age, that here pleasure was never regarded as an end in itself, but that hard work in the interests of others need not be associated with dullness and boredom. The principle (whose observance has maintained the British aristocracy in its unique position) that privilege and position must be paid for by service to the commonweal was never lost sight of, though it was not overstated in a priggish or self-conscious way.

'If Nancy Astor's understanding of childhood was nearly perfect, her approach to the problems of adolescence was less happy. She felt it her bounden duty to chastise, in and out of season, those weaknesses and uncertainties that beset young men and women as they begin to grow up; and she was never afraid to speak her mind. It was not surprising, therefore, that in the hope

of avoiding galling, though often pertinent criticisms, even those who loved her dearly should, at about the age of 18, seek her company less assiduously. Though she might be conscious of this, she felt no resentment, and any disaster, illness or sorrow that befell someone she had known from childhood brought her immediately to the sufferer's side. The sight of pain or unhappiness, whatever their cause, drove all other considerations from her mind, and victims of circumstance or their own folly alike felt that they had a friend upon whom they could utterly rely.'

Victor's descriptive passage about my parents, which I have not interrupted for fear of losing his particular inflection, bridges the gap between the time that my mother arrived to hunt in Leicestershire and the time that she married my father in May 1906. My father was born on 19 May 1878, by odd coincidence on the same day of the same year as my mother. He left America when he was a small child, lived with his family in Rome, where he was tutored in English, French, Italian and Latin, and, at the age of nine, was sent to boarding school in England. The English boarding school at the end of the nineteenth century was a bleak institution, devised for the convenience of parents rather than of children. It was traditionally the first stage of the child becoming a man and being weaned from the comforts and attentions of home, the man-making process consisting of doses of cold baths, cricket, football, religion, the classics and the cane in proportions which varied only with the temperament of the headmaster. It was 'the happiest time of one's life' and generally acknowledged the most miserable, but it had perhaps one saving grace in showing boys that the idyll of life, and the standards of the home, as presented to them by nannies and governesses, only represented a fractional part of existence. I never heard my father complain about his preparatory school, and he was in any case not a man given to complaint, but he once mentioned to me his embarrassment at arriving at a crowded school in which everyone seemed to know each other, in a strange country, talking English like an American, French like a Frenchman (a lapse not easily forgiven by English schoolboys) and Latin like a Latin. He did well at this

school, and passed high into Eton, where he boarded at A. C. Ainger's. There he had a distinguished career, becoming Captain of the Boats, a member of Sixth Form, Treasurer of the Eton Society and Captain of his House, as well as editing the *Eton Chronicle* and winning the Prince Consort's French prize. He also grew a moustache, which was not uncommon for Eton boys in those days, and in his photographs looked extremely serious. His attitude to success was one of unaffected modesty, even a little prudish. His occasional jokes, practical by definition, were strictly of a conventional sort.

Eton moulded my father's character: serious, conscientious and modest. He came to trust in the legitimate standards of good behaviour. He acquired the tastes and values of those of his generation who were brought up to assume, as of right, the responsibilities of their class in society. He then went up to New College, Oxford, where he relaxed his efforts. He had strained his heart rowing, so he took up fencing and polo, at both of which sports he represented his university. He was Master of the Drag Hounds, hunted with the Bicester, enjoyed the convivial life of the Bullingdon, which was then the fashionable club of the wealthier hunting set of undergraduates, and did very little work, taking a fourth-class honours degree. His career conformed to the pattern of his generation who had come on to Oxford from Eton. His brother John, who was two years younger, showed an equal aptitude for sport, played cricket and racquets for Eton, went up to New College, was commissioned in the Household Cavalry and was later seconded to India for three years as A.D.C. to the Viceroy. So far William Waldorf's sons conformed exactly to the pattern of Englishmen. The start to their careers was conventional to a degree.

My father was to make an attempt to break away from his father's rigid pattern. The measure of his success in life, in my opinion, cannot be judged only by the 'good' and constructive things that he did, of which his record is modestly impressive, so much as in the quality of his struggle to think, and where necessary to act, independently of inherited belief, which was

not for him easy because the pattern of his childhood had been restricted, formalistic and rigid; and he was by nature a man of classical rather than romantic mould, a respecter of institutions rather than a rebel. His father lacked the human touch and had almost no contact with his children; and his mother had died when he was little more than a child. Lacking from his solitary parent a living expression of humanity in his home, conscious of being largely American and respecting the need, therefore, not to offend English institutions, he turned towards simple virtues as his guide in life. His life became partly a self-denying ordinance, constricted at many points. I can only salute him for the efforts that he made which, in their turn, taught me that I, too, need not accept all the dogma that I was given, even if it was handed out by him.

In 1902 my father still had three years, after coming down from Oxford, before he met and fell hopelessly in love with my mother: three years before his life became geared to a new and unexpected pitch. He entertained vague thoughts of going into politics; not in the sense that men today adopt politics as a career, but in the manner of his generation who looked on the House of Commons as a suitable part-time occupation for a gentleman of leisure. Until he married he was satisfied to live what was then considered a normal country life, a life of agrarian interests, shooting and hunting in the winter with short excursions abroad in the early spring. He enjoyed sport and he loved horses: riding them, driving them four in hand, and schooling them over fences. He had already, while he was up at Oxford, laid the foundation of his racing stable, and this was an occupation he treated quite seriously. He studied the Mendelian laws of heredity and his bookshelves became crowded with learned works on bloodstock. He even apprenticed himself to a veterinary surgeon in order to study the horse's health and anatomy. It was his own health, however, that was the worry. As well as a weak heart he had developed other symptoms, and in 1905 his doctors told him he had tuberculosis and that he must spend several months of every year abroad. For the next ten years he had to abandon all strenuous activities,

veering at times between nearly normal health and complete physical prostration.

While he was still a bachelor my father met with romance in a very different guise from the vivacious Mrs Shaw who eventually swept him off his feet. Queen Marie of Roumania visited Cliveden. My father visited Bucharest. She was a great beauty of her day, and he was the sort of quiet, dignified young man that appealed to her. Brought up in the court of William Waldorf the metamorphosis to a truly regal court was not as great as might have appeared at first sight. In May 1906 when my father married, the letters from Queen Marie continued to arrive by regular posts, even on his honeymoon. Over this first issue my mother got her own way without much argument. My father was told firmly to see that the letters were stopped, at source.

Everything in my father's life was now changing rapidly, and he was soon to realize that he could abandon all hope of living the quiet life of a country gentleman. My mother made it clear that she knew all about country gentlemen; she had been brought up with them and usually found them dull. His bride was indeed different from anything he had met before. Here was something gay and irresistible; but restless as a grasshopper. Cliveden could not withstand her. The solemn feeling that went with punctuality, Victorian furniture and my grandfather, flew out of the windows when she came in at the door. Tables, desks, carpets were moved, flowers appeared everywhere; even something about the servants altered. There was no familiarity—that was nothing new—but the distance between master and man seemed to be reduced by the feeling of friendliness that pervaded everything she did. Nothing was sacrosanct. The few well-tried friends who had fitted in so perfectly with the quiet atmosphere and the heavy mahogany became as redundant as the antimacassars, the tiger skins and the plant-stands in the hall. They were neither bright nor beautiful enough to escape, uncensured, the scrutiny of the new chatelaine.

These were halcyon days. Health it is true was a worry; at times my father was confined to bed for months on end; but this new-found affection and gaiety more than made up for even the dangers

of tuberculosis. Cliveden was at last a happy home, and the ghosts of conventionalism, and their whole sterile performance, appeared to be laid. And so perhaps it might have continued had not the fates decided to tempt my mother with an even greater challenge, and lead her into the very seat of controversy in which as yet English men held exclusive rights—the House of Commons—at a time when the country was stirring with new revolutionary ideas and when the work of the feminist movement was just beginning to take effect.

In 1910 my father was adopted as Conservative candidate for the Sutton division of Plymouth, a seat he had already unsuccessfully contested, and was returned to Parliament and started on a career which, as he hoped, would realize his ambitions and occupy the rest of his life, a project which was frustrated when his father became a peer. In 1914, with a weak heart and a doubtful chest, he was judged unfit for military service. He continued his work in Parliament and later served as an inspector of ordnance factories. In 1919, when his father died and he was compelled to resign his seat, my mother stood for Plymouth in his place. This was initially regarded by them as an interim measure, so that she would retain the seat for him while he, in the House of Lords, introduced a Bill to allow peers of the realm to stand for election in the Lower House.

My father tried in vain to introduce this reform into the House of Lords to which he had reluctantly acceded. Had he been successful his last situation might have been worse than his first. My mother, from the start, showed an extraordinary aptitude for public life and it is doubtful, once she had found herself in the driving seat, whether she would have handed over the reins without a struggle.

My father now became absorbed in politics of one kind and another. He plunged into the work of committees, off-shoots of the League of Nations, and the Institute of International Affairs of which he became Chairman and of *The Observer* of which he was the proprietor. He founded and supported social institutions in Plymouth to alleviate the hardships which all urban areas were

experiencing after the army was demobilized in 1918. In Plymouth he built a housing estate to replace some of its slums, and Virginia House, and the Astor Institute which provided social centres for boys and girls as well as for the aged. He also provided a personal secretariat for my mother's public activities, furnishing her with facts and arguments in order to supplement her essentially intuitive gifts. Whereas in the arena of English public life my mother brought to bear certain convictions and prejudices which stemmed directly from her Virginian heritage, assisted and rendered more mobile by her intuitive intelligence, my father carried into the arena an insistence on principled behaviour and a carefully and consciously worked-out liberal outlook, an expression of views that were almost the reverse of those held by William Waldorf, the arch and almost psychopathic traditionalist.

My father recognized the fact that William Waldorf's attitude to affairs had been aristocratic, as well as autocratic. William Waldorf had paid scant regard to what other people felt or thought of his behaviour. He had remained imperiously a law unto himself. My father did not applaud this attitude. Being American by birth he did not fit into the English aristocratic pattern. Being puritan by inclination he did not wish to. He wanted to succeed in a life of public service and make amends, as he saw it, for his father's negligence in this respect. He felt particularly keenly that he owed this to the country of his father's adoption. His handicap was that he had little instinctive feeling for people. His approach to life was that of reason, and he allowed his intuition very little play; consequently his methods, though admirably tenacious, were stern and not relieved by those flights of fancy and spontaneous outbursts which so enlivened my mother's life. Lord Brand, who knew my father all his life, described him as a saint, meaning, I fancy, that he was incorruptible, unselfish and ascetic. He was certainly all of these things but, to my mind, the status of saintliness, in its lay sense, implies a conscious degree of detachment which my father, by temperament and inclination, never sought to attain. If, to the best of his ability, he was playing the role of a saint—certainly not for any outward reputation this might gain

him because he did not rely on the applause of women or of other men—it was a role, I felt, that for his own state of happiness he should drop. He would, I believe, have found more edge to life in the rough and tumble of active politics rather than conducting matters from his elevated and secluded plane. He still could not rid himself of his father's rigid, restrictive, punctilious habits. He remained remote, difficult to approach, fettered by his sense of obligation and duty, pleased to allow his remarkable wife to occupy the centre of the stage. As soon as she entered the arena of public life she did so not in a supporting role, in order to further his aims, but in her own context and in her own right. He helped her to do this, and admired her performance; and his restraining hand was always there to avert a crisis. Time and time again he came to her rescue when her tongue ran away with her and she found herself in difficulties. When it came to an issue, in the final analysis it was my father's will that prevailed, not hers. Her convictions, her prejudices and her respect for things English made her naturally a Conservative.

My father's reaction to his father, and his more logically reasoned view of affairs, led him to a form of Liberal empiricism, mistrustful of Socialist theory but equally antipathetic to an aristocratic Conservative approach. His pastimes, the methods by which most people enjoy their leisured hours, remained few. He was interested and involved in the breeding side of racing, and five times his horses came second in the Derby, but he seldom went to a race meeting except to see his own horses run. He liked the countryside, and held a number of theories about farming, but the simple, idle pleasures of the country partly evaded him, due to his insistence on finding a purpose or justification for what he did. He enjoyed best of all those weeks in the year when he escaped to the Hebrides, where he had bought a property on the island of Jura, where he could fish. He hardly ever went to the theatre if he could help it, or listened to music, or took the slightest interest in literature or art. He did not drink or smoke. He eschewed and, as was the case with so much else, appeared to disapprove of the convivial life of the London clubs of which

he was a member. His personal habits remained extremely austere.

Despite this feeling for austerity, my father inherited from his father a certain eccentric sense of doing things regardless of expense which clung to him while he was still a comparatively young man. The first time I travelled to Scotland, not yet aged three, with the rest of the family, my father (who had, admittedly, an obsession about the dangers of tubercular infected milk) took a cow on the train with him, and a cowman from White Place Farm at Cliveden. The cow was milked at Edinburgh, the children were nourished without incurring a risk of infection, they and the train proceeded to Inverness and the cow, and the cowman, were sent back to Cliveden. Whether they were brought back for the return journey I was never able to find out. Nannie Gibbons, who revered my father, when she related this to me did so in no mocking sense. She thought it was quite right and proper that her children should be treated in this way.

Both my parents from an early age put much emphasis on 'doing good'. There were certain discrepancies in their approaches as to methods. My father took the task more seriously than his wife; but it was this belief in 'doing good' and 'being good' that acted as the thread which tied them. What 'good' actually meant is another matter. I was never able to see life in these stark terms. Trying to do 'good' is presumably a more honourable objective than trying to do 'bad'. As a child, in the process of growing up, I came to discover in myself forces which did not recognize these absolute distinctions.

4

Confusion

It is impossible for me to write, even briefly, about my parents without referring to their religion. To attempt to do so would be like writing about Winston Churchill without making even a passing reference to politics. The association of religion was too strong in their lives—and, when I think back, also in my mind—for me to brush it aside. Although neither of my parents came from particularly religious households a great part of their married life became preoccupied with religious study. They acquired the habit about the time I was born, about the middle of the 1914 war. My mother used to tell me that I was the first child 'born in religion'. I was apparently, immaculately born, without pain or anaesthetic. I presumed that all children were immaculately conceived. I was at any rate steeped in religion from a very early age.

Shortly after the 1914 war, which is as far back as I can remember, my mother, apart from attending church once on Sunday and once in the middle of the week, devoted several hours of every day to reading the Bible and religious manuals. My father, every morning and every evening, set aside a quiet period for silent prayer and reading the Bible. Their religion was Christian Science, initially more my mother's inspiration than my father's. Below the level of the surface it conflicted with the outward appearance of our family life, of our schooling, and of the political world of the drawing-room. My mother was the first to be converted from her more orthodox and less demanding Protestant beliefs.

A great many things happened in my mother's life between the years 1885 and 1916, that is to say between the time when she was still a girl living with her father and the year when, a mother of four children, she discovered in Christian Science the religion she was looking for. In 1897 when she married Robert Shaw she was

only seventeen and was far more innocent about life than any bride going to the altar today. This marriage never looked like being a success. My mother did not find enough in Robert Shaw's character or intellect to compensate her for what she regarded as the first ordeal of being married. He became, in her thoughts, dismissed from the scene, a mere spectre, something unreal that did not exist but was nevertheless allowed to carry the blame. She turned in other directions to find the kind of man she could respect. Despite what I have described as her epicene quality she was also an extremely feminine woman, capricious, determined and untamed. Her dreams were cast in a romantic and heroic mould; her hero was Sir Galahad, her heroine St Joan of Arc; and the world seemed to her an exciting place. She already had a highly developed flair for people and for assessing their worth, and despite the range of her romantic fancy she always retained an instinct for worldly values. She could properly claim to be innocent, but she never aspired to being naïve.

In England my mother discovered a new world and made new friends, and in a conventional sense her search might have ended when she married my father and shared his life at Cliveden. However, as a woman she could not be reduced in the way that most women need to be reduced by a man. There still remained this unrequited passion for religion, a search for a particular source of inspiration, for something better than the conventional worldly best which, she had discovered, she could achieve with comparative ease. I have the feeling that the whole time my mother was hankering after the unobtainable because the unobtainable all too quickly became a little dull. She lacked a certain ingredient that could enable her to flavour or indeed tolerate life in its quieter and gentler moods. Such was the nature of her dilemma, the basis of her destructive urge and, as she interpreted it, the challenge to her courage. Certainly when things were easy she became bored and when she was bored she felt weary and even physically ill. At no time did she accept that the ordinary standards of life need necessarily apply to her. Although the pattern of her life since she had left home had been classical and contrived, she

burned with a romantic flame. The person who is at heart a romantic, while recognizing and respecting the patterns of society, must always strive to break beyond its borders and be guided by instinct rather than precept. My mother only felt happy when she had to struggle to achieve something difficult or something new. She could amuse people and she could also irritate them, and sometimes she would harangue them in order to pacify them. There were tensions within her life which she would never admit or examine, and between the years 1907 and 1916 she lived the life of a semi-invalid, confined to lying in bed and resting for the better part of every day. No prescription, no spa, nothing in the way of diet or change could help her. This was a life she simply hated, and all that her doctors could tell her was that she was suffering from nervous exhaustion. Extracts from the diaries which she kept in 1907, 1910 and 1913 show the extent of her distress and, despite a courage which later became proverbial, an unwarranted fear of many ordinary and harmless aspects of life. Psychologically, intellectually, as well as in terms of possessions and worldly success, she had swallowed more than she could digest. From Mirador in Virginia she had forced the pace; a successful skirmish in New York and a triumph in Leicestershire; a victory in London and a husband who not only had all the material benefits that the world could provide but was also devoted and unselfish; a crowd of amusing friends and a magnificent house in the country in which she could live and entertain. She had never paused to consolidate any position she had gained either inwardly or outwardly. She had found herself, irresistibly, on the threshold of power, because wealth and social position practically constituted power in England before the First World War, politics being an adjunct, an essential cog in the machine which could be had for the taking. Outwardly in a worldly way she found herself most fortunately placed,with talents with which to make the most of her situation; and she was ill and tired and for the first time thoroughly unsure of herself. There were now two courses open to her. Either she could conform to the pattern of the world and live the life of a great lady and hostess with the

background of a family, and enjoy the position which she had contrived; or else she could struggle in her own way to find a new star to guide her. To an outside observer that might have seemed the choice. In fact she had no choice in the matter. She was congenitally incapable of either conforming or of realizing any limit to what she could achieve. She enjoyed worldly values but she also despised them. She had never relinquished her habit of prayer and church service. She now searched for a new religion, something outside herself on which she could lean and something that would in turn respond to her inward vision of life. She tried and discarded New Thought and the theories of auto-suggestion and finally lit on Christian Science.

Why it was that Christian Science appeared to be exactly what my mother was looking for, the *laissez passer* which allowed her to proceed on her journey through life with a renewed vigour and sense of conviction, is a difficult question to answer. No one can really plumb the depths of such a predicament. It seems to evoke the whole mystery of life. The idea of analysing each cause and its effect may appear intellectually interesting; but its conclusions in this case would inevitably be confused and sterile. Render unto Freud the things that are Freud's; but in treating with God, and therefore with man, something better than this sort of treatment, with its particular form of hidden conceit, is called for. The point of faith and the acceptance of mystery cannot be spurned. I can do little more than give the facts of the case as I see them and leave it to others to form their own conclusions.

In the first place Christian Science is Protestant in character, nonconformist in essence, and accepts certain forms of miracles as being of everyday occurrence, an optimistic and unfettered view of life which always left my mother quite undaunted. Despite its name, its appeal is emotional rather than intellectual. Its horizons know no limits. It declares that man is capable of perfection and is in no way governed by conventions, or laws, or even by his own history. It is a religion which not only encourages the reading of the Bible but has issued a new interpretation of the Scriptures which has automatically widened the interpretation which its

followers can place on Holy Writ. It also contains a strong dose of straight puritanical prejudice which was axiomatic to my parents' view of life. Its main thesis is that the true world is the world made by God, and the intolerable behaviour of man is the shadow rather than the substance of reality. It was this broad assumption that my mother accepted in her quest for a religion. The answer, however, does not lie wholly in the tenets of the doctrine itself—which in detail strike me as partly unintelligible—so much as my mother's interpretation of its theory. In terms of practical results it confirmed her in the feeling that she was right in her views, and it reconciled her conscience with her worldly position. The effect of this was a renewal of her vitality and strength. She claimed that through her new-found knowledge of God she had been healed. After this she scarcely ever suffered from sickness or fatigue.

In this search for a religion my mother was joined by Philip Lothian (Philip Kerr as he was then) who for some years had been a friend of both my parents. There was an affinity between Philip and my mother, love on his side, and something deeper than friendship and less passionate than love on hers. Philip Lothian, who comes into a later chapter, died at the age of fifty-eight after a short illness in Washington where he was Ambassador, refusing up to the last, as a mark of his faith, to see a doctor. My mother perceived how little the doctors knew about healing, but her uncompromising quality and her lack of reflective powers allowed her to jump to the conclusion that the medical profession, all down the line, was barking up the wrong tree and had learned nothing that was useful about the true nature of human beings. She insisted that, despite any degree of subterfuge, life was either black or white. When this was interpreted in terms of personal preference, when she was guided by her instinct for people, she could detect very quickly the genuine article from the fake. When she allowed the criterion of morality to intervene she became led astray. She failed to see that people could have two completely conflicting sides to their natures, that religious piety, abstinence, self-immolation, could sometimes conceal inner bitterness, the

deformed quality that is born of fear and an excess of caution. People, particularly women, who showed too blatantly their moral fervour, whose lack of humour was immediately apparent, she dismissed as bores. She could mimic them and ridicule them by caricature. Her feeling towards them was ambivalent. On the one hand they 'stood' for something, for something which she stood for; on the other hand, they were not sympathetic to meet. Her view of people remained, in one sense, like a child's. Some people were good and some were bad and the distinction had always to be drawn. Yet she kept encountering so much in life to disprove this notion. This was her dilemma; and the doctrine of Christian Science, which insisted that everyone was good, that failed utterly to take into account the complex nature of man which defies these simple moral ratings, encouraged her to hold on to her simple beliefs. It was, perhaps, these childish beliefs that kept her young and vigorous, a condition which she accepted as proof of the efficacy of Christian Science teaching. But it was this over-simplified moralistic view of life which prevented her reaching any deep understanding of people, despite her natural intelligence and aptitudes.

I have implied that my mother was always essentially Protestant in her views, and this is true in the sense of her antipathy to the Roman Catholic Church. Her antipathy was innate but her reasoning was formed by Philip Lothian. The Church of Rome, she argued, conscripted men's minds: it taught people what to think, how to live and how to act; the Church, the central authority, providing its members, in moments of embarrassment, with a cut and dried solution to their problems. This idea offended her sense of independence; and yet, while rejecting one conception of bigotry, she adopted another without ever realizing that her new religion led in the same direction. Here again, with Christian Science each problem had its solution and each solution had its formula, a formula that was laid down by some central authority. This authority was no doubt kindly and beneficent in intent, but it was certainly not liberal in the ordinary meaning of the word. But tolerance itself, she had always believed, could be carried too

far; in fact, she almost invariably mistook it for weakness. The essential thing for her was to have some reinforcement to her views as to what should or should not be tolerated, and to find this within the body of a Church. It was clearly easier to subordinate doctrine to her own will, to her own interpretation of life, in the Church of Christ Scientist than in the more clearly defined and older established religious bodies. Within this new Church she could have matters more her own way, and could proclaim her faith at the same time. Once she had clasped its banner she held on to it fervently and carried it into every camp. It became part of her strength and part of her weakness. It accentuated both sides of her character: the zealot, the missionary, impelled by love, who longed to help those she met; and the bigot, the woman of overbearing self-will, determined at all costs to get her own way, who at times entertained unusual and unnatural fears about the world and its wickedness. And yet she never allowed her religion to diminish her sense of fun. If anything it added a certain zest to her gaiety. It absolved her conscience daily, almost momentarily, of any sense of guilt. In this somewhat limited sense it greatly simplified her life. Although she was committed to a more sophisticated and involved way of living than she had been used to in the past, she could, without relinquishing any of its attractions, with the help of her text-books, reduce almost everything to terms of right and wrong. She could make her text-books mean anything she liked. Her new religion, as she saw it, confirmed her original view that life need never be dull; and she had practically a genius for that.

This religion was undoubtedly a contributory cause of the deep sorrow which my mother has experienced during the later part of her life. Her study of Science and Health acted only to stimulate the fierceness—the uncompromising quality—in her make-up, which too often allowed her to ride rough-shod over other people's feelings and which, when its elation died down, left her with a feeling of loneliness. The God that she had always recognized was still not allowed to work in a mysterious way nor to use the medium of a still small voice. To her He remained the

God of both the Old and the New Testaments; the God of wrath and the God of love. Her god lived in a box beside her bed and also in a certain corner of her mind. He could be unleashed, like a watch dog, at a moment's call.

The members of the Christian Science Church with whom I have discussed this matter of her religion, while not losing hope for the future, usually hinted that my mother never really understood what it was all about. Christian Science practitioners having their last meal at Cliveden after being dismissed (practitioners were rotated like crops: some of them recurred, others were ploughed in and forgotten), would usually concede a certain originality in her approach. They were, of course, trained optimists, and were left admiring her aspirations rather than her orthodoxy. This was the view subscribed to by Mr Tennant, one of the practitioners, who lost his professional position in the household owing to what my mother regarded as his lack of thrust in matters spiritual, but who was kept on the ration strength as a friend. I once asked him what he thought would have happened if my mother and Mrs Eddy had actually met. Mr Tennant was a gentle, placid character, and he may have been feeling the effects of the shock treatment that was not uncommon at home in those days. He did not believe in the more sensational forms of miracle, nor had he ever attributed the act of levitation to the founder of his Church. His answer was short and to the point: 'Mary Baker Eddy, if she had met your mother, would have taken off and jumped over the clock tower.'

It was a nice idea the Founder of the Mother Church rocketing over the clock tower. With or without a broomstick?

If my answer to my original question does not go very far, perhaps it shows that the later part of my mother's life was not inspired simply by a recognized dogma. Inspiration there was, but it emerged as the result of an amalgam of feelings and experiences whose roots and causes I cannot trace. The Christian Science Church was the channel through which her forces were directed, and I do not wish to attribute to it either an undue measure of credit or an unfair measure of blame.

What was the impact of all this on the home life at Cliveden? One effect was quite simply that the children underwent an intense religious indoctrination, a process so concentrated that in the end it defeated its own ends. The scars of Puritanism remained, sometimes only thinly disguised by the vigorous and almost perverse attempts that the children made to shake them off. There was no exact pattern of behaviour. We all, I think, reacted differently. It is hard to find an analogy to this situation, but I remember that when I was up at Oxford a friend of my father's suggested that I should read Sir Edmund Gosse's book *Father and Son*. He told me that our life at home was comparable to Gosse's early life as it is recorded in this work. Gosse wrote before the days of psychiatrists, before parents and teachers had evolved new theories for bringing up or breaking down their children, and he remembered and recorded his early childhood in astonishing detail and with a remarkable sense of detachment. His father, who was an intelligent man and a distinguished naturalist of his day, adhered to a blind religious faith in the pre-ordained nature of both the physical and the spiritual world, despite very considerable scientific evidence which he came to discover and which ran contrary to most of his religious belief. By conviction, or possibly by convenience, he also believed in the absolute right of parental authority. Young Gosse was made an acolyte to a crazy religion. Improvised prayers and the society of 'saints' became his daily portion. His position as a child was embarrassing in the extreme. Quite clearly he would have been made to feel a fool among his friends, except that he was not allowed to have any friends. In this last particular the comparison between the life of the Gosse child and the life of the Astor children at Cliveden does not hold good. In passing I raise my hat to Sir Edmund Gosse. When I read his book I felt that he had solid grounds for complaint. He was an only child and he was not, for a long time, allowed to get his nose above water. It must have been very gloomy indeed, all those prayer meetings and exhortations and threats of fearful reprisals in another world. At Cliveden we certainly experienced our difficulties, our tussles, our skirmishes and sieges, but they

were relieved by contact with a wider world where clearly the Christian Science doctrine did not apply.

Religious exhortation was further confused by the Langhorne's notion that a good row was the spice of life, a general process of sharpening the wits. In my family at the end of any battle laughter mingled with the tears. We licked our wounds and went on to the next thing. Unlike Sir Edmund Gosse our lives did not appear dull or drab; on the other hand, unlike his life, it was necessary at Cliveden to cut oneself off from the herd in order to think. Solitude became for me an absolute necessity. Life looked-for in a permanently jazzed-up setting seemed like life going to waste. The throbbing syncopation drowned the melody. The music of sorrow and lament also had its harmonies and its meaning; and the breath of Puritanism, despite all the social trappings and the sounds of gaiety, blew like a cold north-east wind.

5

Cliveden

When I think of Cliveden, and try to recapture the atmosphere of the house, and a sense of the orderliness of the life which gave it its rhythm and which provided the setting for the exciting and less ordered life which my mother led there, I often think of it as a series of sounds. The background music varied with the seasons. In summer it would be the motor-mowers on the lawn below the terrace, and the swifts whistling through the air and fluttering into the eaves above the nursery windows. In winter it was the crackle of the log fire in the hall which burnt day and night, and the sound of the cowls on the roof which revolved and clanked in the wind. On a still day the chime of the clock tower could be heard far away in the woods or from the other side of the river. At night the chime was turned off and it was only turned on again at eight in the morning. But each department on the place had its own particular sounds. There was Mr Harrison, the nightwatchman, going on his rounds from the cellars to the top landings, lighting his way with a torch. He walked with a slow and measured tread which made the floor-boards creak. At certain points he would stop to register his progress on a series of time-clocks. This made a loud click, and punctuated the sound of his steps. At five o'clock the housemaids started their day—cleaning, scrubbing, dusting and tidying; hurrying so as to become invisible before the first guests came down to breakfast. On the landings they moved with light nimble footsteps, like mice scuttling from one corner to another. At five-thirty in the summer, and a little later in the winter, the sounds came from the stables; the clanking of pails, water running into buckets, and the firm quick steps of Mr Brooks and the grooms. At six o'clock in the summer, and while it was still dark in the winter, the horses, wearing their

blankets, moved off in pairs. The start of early morning exercise made a particular echo. At first it was the metallic sound of hooves on cobbled paving, echoed by the wings of the house; then the softer note as the hooves touched the gravel of the drive.

At seven o'clock Nannie would have her early morning cup of tea brought to her in bed by the nursery maid. Nannie Gibbons slept in the night nursery in a four-poster brass bed between Jakie and me. She had once had a cold and thought that she might give it to us, and ever since then she had slept with her head away from ours and her toes near our pillows. By the time her tea arrived Jakie and I would already have been carrying on a muted conversation; the arrival of the tea merely signalled the official opening of our day. Like all children we started the day with great gusto; with talk, laughter, banging of doors and running up and down the passages. By now the house was fully awake except for the guests who would not be called till eight or half-past.

At eight o'clock there was breakfast in the servants' hall in the basement, and in the steward's room on the ground floor where Lee, Mrs Addison the housekeeper, Arthur my father's valet, my mother's personal maid and one or two visiting servants had their meals. At nine o'clock Lee went up to the first floor and performed his first ritual of the day. With a flourish he would pick up a large drumstick and, slowly at first, but working up to a fine crescendo of noise, he sounded the gong for dining-room breakfast. The opening bars of this were like thunder rumbling in the distance, then the crash of the storm and, to give it a note of artistry, the sound would be made to roll and fade out slowly. Lee performed this function, as he did everything else, immaculately and with a sense of style. After this everyone, at least officially, was awake and the day had started in earnest.

From the top landing there was a regular cacophony of sounds, of barking dogs and calling children; and from the floor below, the chief soloist would have already started a rehearsal of the intricate part she played, using several instruments at the same time. My mother was called at eight o'clock with a tray of coffee

and fruit. She then spent half an hour reading the Bible and *Science and Health*. This was called 'doing the lesson', and the lesson was invariably done, every morning and usually twice a day. This was part of the business of 'getting one's thinking right for the day'. If at this stage I have conveyed the impression of a process in any way parallel to the meditation and communion which signals the start of the day in monastic houses of ecclesiastical teaching, I must correct it. The 'lesson' was more an effort of concentration and will than anything else. In the first place it had to be because the telephone kept ringing. If the telephone was disconnected the interruption would be from one of the children, or a nephew or niece, looking in to say good morning. This visit might result in laughter, argument, vituperation—or another telephone call. In any case it always meant that certain passages of the lesson were read again, this time out loud and with a prefix: 'Now keep still and listen to this, it will really help you. There's *nothing* like the life of St Paul. Michael, you must study it.' Later, of all the saints the one I particularly rejected was St Paul with his sudden *volte face* of a conversion. My mother's religious asides were spoken in a gentle voice as she turned the pages of the Bible and concentrated on the words of the text. But quickly the tone of her voice would vary; a note of humour would come into it and, either to catch the interest of the child or because what she was about to read out was such a mouthful that she could not properly digest it herself, she would look up and say in the purest imitation of a Southern Negro woman, 'Yassir, I'se gonna help yew. Me and Mistah Jesus is gonna help yew.'

After Mrs Eddy came the cold bath and physical exercises, my mother still in her bath cap and with grease on her face, touching her toes or standing on her head. This was interspersed with calling for Rose Harrison, telling her that she had put out the wrong dress, and telling her not to talk so much. One of the points about Rose was that she talked nearly as much as my mother and, in her broad Yorkshire accent, she always answered back. 'It's no good you going on like that, m'lady. You told me last night to give you the yellow print, and now that you've got it you're not

satisfied.' Rose always emphasized the last word in her sentences. But Rose's words would probably be lost to my mother, who by this time would be telling her to do something quite different, or calling upstairs to a child—or else the telephone would be ringing again. My father, who woke early, used to put on a kennel coat and take the dogs for a walk and join the rest of the family for breakfast at nine o'clock in the dining-room.

Breakfast would hardly be finished before my mother would be downstairs and dealing with the housekeeping arrangements for the day. Monsieur Gilbert, the chef, in his white jacket and carrying his menu book, would come into her boudoir to discuss the meals. After this it would be Lee, or the housekeeper, or the gardener who had come in to arrange the flowers. (Once Lee gave notice. It was one of those dreadful moments in childhood when the friable quality of the grown-up world is revealed. My mother had driven him too far. He had answered coldly, but emphatically, that he had come to the end of his tether and he would be leaving at the end of the month. Quick as a flash my mother saw the danger. 'In that case, Lee, tell me where you're going because I'm coming with you.' It was no good. He could not leave.)

My mother was herself an expert and meticulous housekeeper and nothing escaped her notice. Her main work in the morning was with her secretary—answering letters, issuing invitations, or writing out notes for a speech—but before this the children had to be given their 'lesson'. From an early age it was impressed on us that in some respects we would be lucky if we survived the rest of the day without disaster if we neglected this part of our duties. Although I cannot pretend that we regarded this period as anything more than a routine duty which had to be performed, we usually preferred the lesson to be given by our mother rather than our father. It offered us more chances to digress from the subject in hand. My father's method of giving us the lesson, although it followed the pattern of reading extracts from the Bible and *Science and Health*, contained a quiet but stubborn logic of its own. The whole episode became more portentous; and when it was finished we would leave his room knowing that we could never

live up to the expectations of this good man who, at times, took such a stern and uncompromising view of life.

When I was aged about six religion was simply a game, an incomprehensible game that I was made to play, something to which I paid lip service in order to comply with the whim of the grown-ups. It was a way of pretending to be good or at least fooling my parents into believing I was being good. We had at Cliveden an electric flat-bottomed canoe in which we made short excursions up and down the home reaches of the Thames. One afternoon when, with our parents, we set off in this canoe I pleaded to be allowed to steer; and since we were in a quiet reach of the river I was allowed to sit in the stern and take the wheel, my father and mother placing themselves in the forward seats with their backs to me, talking happily to the rest of their children. This was delicious. I was on my own and in control of the boat, moving gently and almost silently against the stream. I was the captain of a ship. In front of me was a pile of cushions on the seat. After a little while I became tempted to see if the cushions would float. There was also a large sun hat with a ribbon on it which would look rather nice bobbing up and down in the water. Leaving the wheel, I took one of the cushions and dropped it over the side and watched fascinated as it receded in the wake of my ship. Then another, then a third, and then at an appropriate interval the hat. I was now an admiral commanding a whole flotilla of ships moving in line ahead. And then there was a yell. I was woken from my reverie by piercing and admonishing tones. Panic set in. I had done an awful thing and there was neither explanation nor excuse that I could give. But there was a pass-word. Before being scolded and humiliated, finding myself in a position from which I saw no other escape, I would try it and see if it worked. I looked up at my mother and told her I wanted to sing a hymn. 'You want to do what?' By now near to tears I answered: 'Let's all sing a hymn.' I began to chant: 'O gentle presence, peace and joy and power.' The onslaught had been checked and, encouraged, I went on to complete the verse. A solo performance, but they could not, I figured, lay hands on me while I was trilling these sacred words.

It worked. A little later I was ashamed of this act of gross deception but my mother, because it was so incongruous, could only laugh. Little by little I was discovering a private world of my own, one that I could not share with anyone, a world of fantasy which I came to think of as my 'real world', part of the garden of childhood into which I retreated at the sound of danger and from which I only fully emerged once I came to identify myself with a wider, more variegated world in which, as a young man, I could quell the voices and injunctions which had at times petrified me. Before I emerged from the incubus of paternal authority I came to think of myself as two people: one, a kind of 'public' person, in whom I only half believed, the other a private person, alive with ideas and feelings of affection, whose voice had still to find expression.

The life of the children at Cliveden ran to certain prescribed rules. We had a routine, and this was fortunate as it provided us with a regularity which was in contrast to much else that was irregular and surprising. After breakfast and 'the lesson' we went out riding with Brookie, every day except Sundays. Like all grooms and people professionally associated with horses, his clothes were dapper and his manner brisk. For riding with the young gentlemen he wore breeches, gaiters and a bowler; for driving them in the tub-cart a dark brown suit and a bowler; and for taking them out hunting, top boots and a short felt top hat. Riding was a serious form of pleasure; it was fun but it was not frivolous. I remember one day walking over to the stables carrying a cardboard shield with a large red cross painted on it (no doubt an influence from the Crusades) and a wooden dagger tucked into my stocking beneath my breeches. A young Don Quixote, perhaps? The knight-errant idea appealed to me at the time. Brookie, however, was no Sancho Panza. He confiscated the shield and the dagger until the ride was over. There were rules about what his young gentlemen could wear out riding.

Brookie, like most people on the place, took a pride in his work, in his horses and, I think, in us. His job was simply to take us riding and he made it as interesting as he could. He varied his

rides with clockwork regularity: up the road to the paddocks at Hedsor, through the woods to Taplow Court, or a game of hide-and-seek in the Pheasantry, with my brother and me riding flat out, in and out of the trees, trying to catch up with him. The culmination of this came in the winter when hunting started. There were certain members of the Garth Hunt whom Brookie treated reverentially, his reverence based on their reputation in the hunting field. A word of approval from Colonel Barker, the Master, on the turn-out of the Cliveden stables, and Brookie's day was made. The Garth hounds ostensibly hunted foxes, but even in those days the suburbs and allotments of Maidenhead, Bracknell and other neighbouring towns were encroaching on the Garth country. For every fox there were a dozen cats, and my thoughts on the subject became almost as confused as those of the hounds. Were we hunting cats or was it foxes? Brookie, at any rate, with two small children on leading reins, usually hunted Colonel Barker from a discreet distance. 'Barker by name and Barker by nature', was what they called him, those members of the field who had experienced the rough side of his tongue. Bark he might, but his jumping days were nearly over, and he knew all the roads and gates in his country. He seldom broke out of a fast trot, and when he did venture over an obstacle it was usually one which our ponies could manœuvre. Once when I felt bold enough to take my own line, I lost the hunt but found the Master, and assuming that he knew the habits of his foxes I dogged him on his heavyweight cob. He shouted something to me which I did not catch. He then dismounted and only then did I see why he had taken such an independent course. Unable to shake me off, and unable to resist the calls of nature, he disappeared behind a tree.

In some ways the thing that impressed me most about Brookie was the way he conducted his home life. It appeared in every respect to be so totally different from our own. Mrs Brooks was a large, good-natured woman, and she and Brooks had met, many years ago, when she was working in a laundry delivering the washing. Whether he established his supremacy in those early courting days, or whether that came later, I do not know, but

ever since I knew her Mrs Brooks did exactly what Mr Brooks told her. When we came back into the stable-yard after riding we would go to say good morning to Mrs Brooks and to collect the dogs' dinners. Brookie would open the door and shout upstairs: 'Mother, come down here!' A sound of scuffling and Mrs Brooks came clattering down the stairs. 'Oh, Mr Michael, you *do* look well,' she would beam. '*Oh*, you do look well. *Doesn't* he look well? Oh, I say, you *do* look well!' At this point Brookie would interject, 'Now shut up, Mother, let's have those dinners—quick and hurry up about it!' Clatter of feet going upstairs, a quick turn round, and Mrs Brooks would appear with three plates of dogs' food. 'Oh, Snuff, he is a *nice* dog. Oh, he's *such* a nice dog. Oh, *isn't* he a nice dog?' and once more Brookie would bring the conversation to a close: 'That's enough of that, Mother. Upstairs!' And Mrs Brooks would clatter up the stairs again to prepare the lunch and attend to those domestic details which, no doubt, made this side of Brookie's life a marital bliss.

At half-past two every day Mrs Gibbons (Nannie was accorded the honorary title of Mrs in deference to her age and her position in the house), Mr Brooks and my younger brother and I, wrapped up against the elements, went for a drive in the tub-cart. We were given no option about these drives, although we often rebelled against their monotony. Several hours of every week we drove round Hedsor or Burnham Beeches: two small boys peering over the edge of the cart staring disconsolately at Wagtail's hind-quarters. Wagtail's chestnut flanks, his docked tail and his behind absorbed my whole attention: his ribs heaving in and out, out of rhythm to the sound of his hooves, at the end of a prolonged trot; his ham muscles quivering with tension as he dragged the cart up to the top of a hill; the jolly explosions of farts that he gave when, the flat regained, he resumed his trot. If the explosions were loud enough, or went on long enough, I would stare at Nannie until her controlled expression broke into a laugh. When we came in there was tea in the nursery with a fat, kindly old mademoiselle whose name I cannot remember. Our French, such as it was, was colloquial from an early age. At five o'clock,

clean and spruce, we were sent downstairs. The grown-ups would be having their tea in the hall, and there we entered a different world: the exciting world of my mother and her friends.

My mother's gaiety acted like magic with small children, her own or anyone else's. It was thrilling and contagious. She enjoyed the whole game of turning everything into a farce, of making fun of the awe-inspiring things of life which was what every child prayed for. And it was not just fun, it was a riot. With children she was in her element. From her they met with something quite different from the usual set of instructions passed on to them by parents and nannies. The average grown-up, when faced with a child—his own or someone else's—will, in self-defence, remember the cardinal rule which is: 'Don't get it over-excited.' My mother's approach was a more positive one. Her idea was to make it laugh. She scored success after success. Children in slums, children in prams, children with weeks of grime all over their faces, and cosseted little Lord Fauntleroys of children all provided enthusiastic audiences for the very personal performance which she gave entirely for their benefit. This was her age group: the very young and wholly unselfconscious. With anything in between the age of innocence and the fully-matured creature her performance often misfired.

These sessions in the evening, when all was laughter and high spirits, could not always be sustained. At times my mother's mood was admonitory rather than encouraging: 'do's' and 'don'ts' were flung around the room, sometimes for good measure, at other times more pointedly in one particular direction. If a child were unlucky enough to be singled out for preferential treatment of this kind he could be made to feel small, wicked and foolish; and childish laughter could be turned into childish tears of indignation in no time at all. It was part of our training to avoid this kind of situation, and especially to hide any tears; because tears meant being ordered to stop crying, an order so perplexing that it occasionally worked. The essential tactic when a general skirmish of words looked like taking a turn for the worse, was to keep the battle fluid and confused and try to avoid being cornered.

In a critical moment Jakie and I could rely on each other for support and, provided my father kept out of it, we could either of us create a fairly impressive diversion of our own. The drama was too rapid to count for much—when we were still very young.

There were, as well, quieter moods which were every bit as enjoyable and a good deal less precarious. When there were no visitors, which was not often, my father would read us an adventure story, or my mother would read us *Uncle Remus*; or else we would go into the boudoir, turn the lights out, and lie in front of the fire and listen to her 'nigger' stories which she remembered from her own childhood. These stories were witty and humorous, with a touch of pathos which is inevitable in any Negro story. My mother acted every part with her voice, making her characters sound lazy and confiding, boastful or frightened. We were listening to the world of the coloured people at Mirador: a world of friendly, puzzled, grown-up children, interspersed with the high-spirited behaviour of her brothers who, in turn, assumed the childish form of the Negroes when she introduced her father into the picture.

At an early age we learnt the habit of mixing with older people and total strangers. We were taught to be polite, particularly to servants and people who would not answer back. But familiarity, if it did not breed contempt, at least ensured that we became no respecters of persons. Mr Lloyd George was distinguished in our eyes for his exceptionally long hair. Lord Balfour was tall, kindly and detached, as a grown-up should be. J. L. Garvin had an engaging but odd way of speaking, and looked as if his eyes would pop out of his head. Lionel Curtis, with his shaggy grey head, looked to us like a man who probably knew everything there was to be known, but he gave himself away by his jokes which, we could have told him, were not faintly funny. But Dr Salter from Plymouth found Jakie and me in the woods where we made our hide-out. He came on us in our own territory when we were peacefully trying to smoke the pipes which we had spent the morning making under the unobservant eye of Stainer in the carpenter's shop. He sensibly made no reference to this. Instead

we talked together about subjects that interested us; such as the behaviour of wild animals, and the chances of avoiding having to go away to school by taking to the woods, like Jack Shepherd the highwayman, and living in the caves he once lived in on the river bank. Dr Salter took us into his confidence and we treated him more seriously than the late Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary. He had not quite their imposing manner; but even that to a child was reassuring.

My uncle Bob Brand has told me that he remembers one day coming to Cliveden to help entertain members of an international delegation collected from all over the world, who had come down from London for the afternoon. These elderly and possibly distinguished visitors were assembled in the hall when he arrived and my mother was greeting them collectively and individually. (I remember an occasion like this. Some of them were Chinese; we thought they were all Chinese.) All at once he caught sight of Jakie and me. We were evidently in the middle of playing a game by ourselves and the fact that the hall had suddenly filled up with a lot of Chinese did not strike us as odd. We were simply using these visitors as vantage points, as trees in a forest behind which we could hide, as natural obstacles impeding our escape. On occasions like this we were anonymous, and we felt invisible.

When it was time to go to bed it was only reluctantly that we left the exciting arena of the grown-ups and went up to our bath, supper, and a story read to us by Nannie. Our prayers were of a traditional kind. It was only later, when we were old enough for a governess, that the more confusing phrases of Mrs Eddy's text, touching on the mysteries of the metaphysical world, became part of the syllabus. Both the words and their meaning were complicated and well beyond our reach, and their implications were quickly dispelled by the long conversations Jakie and I carried on in the dark, and by the stories we told each other of the imaginary characters we invented—preposterous caricatures of ourselves and of the people we had met downstairs.

At the age of five, or thereabouts, we had set periods in the morning and afternoon for lessons in English and French. As the

rides in the pony cart became a thing of the past we still had plenty of time to explore the world of Mr Stainer in the carpenter's shop, Monsieur Gilbert in the kitchen, and Johnnie Camm, the gardener's son, and his activities in the gas yard which he chose as his retreat. I cannot remember a time at Cliveden, until I was nearly ready to leave Eton, when there was not a tutor or a French governess or the threat of a French governess. French was considered essential, and if we did not have a governess we were sent abroad for part of the holidays to stay with a family in Paris or Nice. The probability of this extra work in the holidays depended on our school reports of the previous term, but as these never came up to my father's expectations the governess, or much worse the trip to France, usually materialized.

When I had reached the age of seven or eight, my father engaged the services of a member of the ground staff at Lords, who came for a fortnight during the Easter holidays to teach us cricket. George Fenner was a fortunate choice of man; he was not only an expert teacher of his art but an original wit, and we always looked forward to his visits.

My brother David, more under the influence of Jorrocks than W. G. Grace, owned an odd assortment of beagles which he hunted from his pony in preference, any day, to practising cricket. That was until the unhappy day when my father considered David's school reports so inadequate that the beagles were summarily banished. They were contentious animals at the best of times. They were not house-trained, but it was impossible to keep them out of the house. They gave tongue, as all good beagles should, but only when they were shut up in the kennels for the night. David was always trying to get them to use their noses. I can remember running through the woods, dragging a sack soaked in aniseed, feeling like an escaped convict from Dartmoor with a lot of bloodhounds on his track. The beagles eventually got bored with aniseed so other more exciting smells had to be found to encourage them. My mother was always receiving presents from America: chocolates, sweets, pecan nuts and sometimes a Virginia ham. One day there turned up the most cherished and

inedible of all gifts—roe herrings from the mouth of the James river, pickled in brine, revolting in appearance, and stronger than mustard to the tongue. David got wind of them the moment he came through the dining-room door at breakfast. They were part of my mother's nostalgic past, part of our breakfast, but above all else God's gift to disillusioned beagles who were acting as if they had lost their sense of smell. The drag was a roaring success that morning; the scent was blinding, the beagles ran like dogs possessed, chasing they knew not what, but something rare and pungent, which they deemed worth going after for once. David, Jakie and I came back for lunch flushed and elated. United by the spirit of the chase we thought the morning's sport well worth the scolding.

As far as our education went our parents held diametrically opposite views. My father regarded all education as important in principle; not because it stimulated the curiosity into following new lines of thought or increased one's ability to enjoy life, but because, to his mind, it spelt the difference between being serious and being frivolous. An educated man, he would reason, was someone who was in a position to pull his weight; an uneducated man was always at a disadvantage—a precept which was not obvious to a child who had such opportunities for enjoying life provided he could divest it of its various tutors. This, had it not been for other influences, would have led me to suppose that educated men were the most frightful bores. My mother's approach was quite different. She enjoyed intelligent people and natural talent wherever she met it, and she often enjoyed drawing out some expert on his particular form of expertise. She saw certain advantages in being educated; but her view was tempered by her contempt for earnest, intellectual people—women in particular—who became so carried away by their knowledge that they ignored what was to her the point of living. The point of life was not to stuff your head with a lot of facts and then think you had learned anything. The point of life was always to be found at the point of contact with people; not with theories, however erudite. Humour was the standard by which she judged the intelligentsia: it was

the hall-mark she had to recognize before she was prepared to take them seriously.

The large English country house and estate has now nearly vanished except as a spectacle for sightseers who today are usually invited to view the corpse now that the spirit has left it. It used to be a community made up of many component parts. There was the life of the house with its different departments—housemaids, kitchen, pantry, etc.; the various offices which attended to the house—carpenters, coachmen, electricians, plumbers, etc., and the life of the gardens, the farm, the dairy and the woods. Cottage and mansion enjoyed a corporate existence which it is difficult to recapture nowadays in the impersonal field of public enterprise.

As there was no village to Cliveden the club and recreation rooms, which during the First World War had been part of the Canadian War Hospital, became the centre of social life. Outside the main gates, it is true, there stood the Three Feathers public house, posted as a salutary reminder of the inefficacy of anyone advocating prohibition. But the club itself was licensed with its own bar and it had the additional attraction of a billiard-room, kitchen, and hall, with at one end a small stage and a piano. As well as being in every sense a club for its members it was also the place for teas on Saturdays for the estate cricket and football matches.

Before the Second World War, before the habit of the cinema, the sports stadium, the dog track and the dirt track, and later the television, had become quite such an established part of people's lives, the village green and the village lane provided everything that old man or lover, girl or boy looked forward to at the end of their working week. For Clivedeners in the summer there was Boulter's lock, where punts, launches and pleasure steamers could be stared at, envied, and made the subject of gossip by anyone who chose to stroll down to the river and stand on its banks. For the patient or the philosophical the river provided fishing

of a sort; for the home-lovers there remained the cottage garden, to be spaded, planted and trimmed. But for most, young or old, winter or summer, the recreation ground was the centre of attraction. Here the home team every Saturday afternoon defended its reputation, at football and cricket, against its neighbours and rivals. Lee, portly and almost raffish-looking in a blue cricket cap, used to play when he could get away from his duties at the house. So did Shepherd the woodman, skinny, old, braced, belted and lantern-jawed. So did a man from *The Observer*, evidently one whose services were not required on Saturdays, who always removed his teeth before going in to bat. Brookie's son, Stanley, young and athletic, was immaculately accoutred in white flannels and a blazer; so was my cousin Reggie Winn, distinguished in an Eton Rambler cap, the most daring and also the most accident-prone player on the side. Hubert Smith, the agent, was distinguished by a hockey blue he had gained at Oxford; but Soper, who learned his round-arm bowling flicking stones against a tree, was accredited with equal athletic distinction in this company. Jakie and I, and sometimes David though he really disliked the game, also played for the side.

The estate dance in the recreation room in the winter was a fancy-dress affair for the employees at Cliveden and White Place. After dinner the house party, in ordinary dress, would put in an appearance, the children being allowed to wear disguise. This was the one night in the year when Arthur Bushell, my father's valet, allowed himself complete dispensation from his position of under-butler. Arthur was a natural mimic, who observed a sense of the proprieties in the dining-room and an irreverent form of burlesque once he was through the green baize door into the pantry. For the fancy-dress dance, assisted by Rose Harrison, he usually dressed up as Nellie Wallace, wearing lorgnettes and a preposterous hat. Lee, who appeared at the dance for a short time in his ordinary clothes, ushered the house staff into the station wagon accompanied by this parody of a woman who, only half an hour earlier, had been going about his duties discreetly dressed in a stiff shirt and black tails. My parents and their house guests

would go down to watch the parade and assist in the judging, the younger children using the occasion to cavort and go wild, clinging to the illusion that, dressed as pirates or painted as Red Indians, they could not be detected. When Arthur came round in the parade, usually accompanied by Rose dressed as a charlady, the lorgnettes became those, not of Nellie Wallace, but of Lady Desborough, our neighbour at Taplow. For an instant the mouth, the expression, and whole posture gave the caricature. My father occasionally looked rather taken aback at seeing his friend and neighbour brilliantly mimicked by his valet, and to witness a side of Arthur's character of which he was not made aware for the other three hundred and sixty-four days in the year. This particular turn was strictly for the benefit of the family. Arthur ventured to the brink but did not go too far. This was an occasion for local wits and characters to come into their own, and we did no more than see it started and then disappear, the children being pulled away protesting.

My brother Jakie once noted that our family looked like theatre people. In a group they had the same friendly garrulous quality, the air of being tightly knit to each other by some intangible chord, yet at the same time self-conscious, solitary and separated. That may be. Our home life was certainly punctuated by acting, the most spontaneous and least co-ordinated acting I have ever seen.

The sudden outbursts of mimicry and burlesque could happen at any time. It might be a charade, in which case everyone joined in; but as often as not it started with my mother slipping a pair of celluloid false teeth into her mouth while in the middle of a conversation at dinner. When this happened her whole personality was transformed; another creature had been spirited into the room and now sat in the place that a moment ago she had occupied, a creature bearing a superficial resemblance to Lady Astor but in every other respect a total stranger. If, for instance, she decided to turn herself into a Tsarist Russian émigrée then we found that we were talking to a Romanoff or a Troubetskoi whose life had been a chapter of the most appalling disasters. In a quiet monotone,

with a tired, detached expression of face, she would recall one episode after another, treating disaster with familiarity, and making only the trivial sound important. While the mood lasted she lived the characters that she portrayed and interpreted them with the personal vision of the artist.

These characters usually appeared on the slightest pretext in the dining-room when the conversation looked like becoming monotonous and my mother wished to escape from ordinary-life conversation and jump into another element. Her sense of artistry gave this imaginative element a touch of reality that more conventional conversation might have lacked. If the mood carried we would move to the long library and, with the adjustment of chairs and tables, give the performance a more theatrical setting. Then we knew we would be treated to other samples of her extensive repertoire. I can remember only a few of them. There was the little Jewish business man, and in order to do him justice she would hurry upstairs and a few moments later appear again wearing trousers, a tail coat, and a bowler hat crammed over her ears. This character had no name or any name. He was in business, any sort of business. He was excitable, affectionate, gigglish, a family man devoted to his wife and children: he was confidential, persuasive, but really suffered from terrible anxieties which at times rendered him hysterical. Then there was the horsey English lady who hunted in Leicestershire. The false teeth were enough to do her justice. This character went hard to hounds, swore a bit, and suffered from no anxieties whatsoever. There was also the lady of infinitely good breeding and no brains, conventional and vague, who found Americans common. There was Margot Asquith, straight out of the bottle, by which I mean undiluted in essence, a true reporting from life. And there was the frightened mean old lady with no teeth in her head, her skin all wrinkled and her hair pulled down over her face, who looked shrewd and canny and who was deeply suspicious of her neighbours. In the library these characters came to life; sometimes to give a recital of their experiences but usually to carry on conversations with everyone in the room. It was more than a talented performance. My mother

knew the whole range of the business instinctively. Turning her back on an audience she could indicate by a walk the lady whose feelings had been slighted but who still retained her pride; or the heroic old body who joined the women's services at the outbreak of war and whose only thoughts were blind patriotism and loyalty to the flag.

The mood was contagious and other voices would join hers, once the stage was set. Reggie Winn, her nephew by marriage, while lacking quite her sense of audience reaction, was at any rate an equally wholehearted performer. Jakie, as a ventriloquist's doll or as a retired Indian army colonel, demonstrated that he was clearly a chip off the same block. The *pièce de résistance*, after my mother had retired from the centre of the stage, was my brother Bobbie's version of a parson delivering his sermon. This was, appropriately, left to the last, as being the funniest single turn of the evening and the one most guaranteed to bring down the curtain. With a shout of protest my mother would apply the censorship, but not before Bobbie's work had been done. Ever since those days sermons from the pulpit had to be very good indeed before they could banish from my mind the picture I carry of the Very Reverend Robert Gould, his refined, drawn-out, ecclesiastical tones, his anguish, his doubts, and his expressions of faith when addressing himself to the subject of his text: 'Is There an After Life on the Moon?' Joyce Grenfell, who often took part in these divertissements, had to wait until she could appear as a professional artist, in front of a public audience, before her talents were given, by us at any rate, the recognition that was their due.

Meals. Everything or anything seemed to happen at meals. Conversation was of a general sort, sometimes directed at a neighbour, at other times at someone at the far end of the room. Food gave courage, courage to chance remarks that we would not otherwise have dared make. Such as the time when a lady from Boston, a stranger to the table, caused a momentary and embarrassed silence by suggesting that someone ought to write my mother's life. What an appalling thought that some stranger

from outside should interpret our behaviour. Bobbie brought the talk down to earth by asking what its title should be, and the youngest member of the tribe answered instantly, to his mother and the room at large, that the title should be 'Guilty but insane'. Sometimes a conversation would develop incomprehensibly into a heated argument and one of us would be ordered to leave the room, and then others, drifting or in protest, would follow, and a certain confusion would reign, and after the confusion and the protests and apologies, no one could properly remember what it was all about or how it had started. There was never recrimination. As far as I can remember there were few bad debts carried over into the next hour. My mother, Bobbie and Jakie mostly created the laughter. David shared it: Bill, quieter by temperament, and I, not much of a public wit, respectively did not and would not compete. When ideas were being exchanged telepathically, or at the speed of sound, and burlesque and parody were being suggested rather than fully expressed, a laboured passage, a self-conscious imitation or, worst of all, a dirty but unfunny joke, could cause an immediate silence, an awkward mood of embarrassment. The most enlivening conversations within the family were elliptical, transmitted like messages in shorthand or code, and if any of the family could not catch the mood the best he could do was try to enjoy it and not compete. This situation had its inherent dangers; implying an inner circle of those who were capable of feeling in *one* way, and those who were not. Inevitably but privately we granted one another accolades and stigmatisms based on our ability to communicate sympathetically, insignia which were apposite but incomplete, limited to the perception of childhood.

Despite enchanting moments when the family felt happily united, moments that were infinitely reassuring, it was usually a relief when there were outsiders present. When we were just the family all sense of personal privacy evaporated. Visitors, especially if they were what I thought of as 'worldly' rather than 'religious' people, formed a silent court of appeal, their presence imposing a modicum of restraint.

The prodigious talkers. Were there ever such talkers brought together in one place? Bernard Shaw commanded an audience and his talk demanded one. But J. L. Garvin, Walter Elliot, Lionel Curtis and Geoffrey Dawson had to compete. Garvin would go ten minutes without eating when he was talking, otherwise he lost his place. Lionel Curtis on a Federated Europe evoked a sense of timelessness, of something inexorable which had to be stated and had to be heard, impervious to Bobbie's aside, voicing our unspoken thoughts, of 'Can't anyone tell him to shut up?' which carried to his end of the table and roused my mother to ask Bobbie to shut up, and through the various requests of 'shut up' Lionel boomed on, noble and unbowed. The food, which seemed incidental, was excellent though somewhat rich. The Christian Scientists, who were silent when talk was political, were the real enthusiasts at eating. It was their only vice. And drink—hock and claret and port and brandy, appeared when there was company. Teetotal principles were not obligatory for guests.

Alice, my first cousin and my mother's niece, lived with her family in a house adjoining the estate, and so, for much of my childhood, did my Aunt Norah and her family. Alice appeared as a kind of handmaiden to my mother. In the eyes of each, neither could do wrong. They were, after all, both Langhornes which, in some undefined way, was the equivalent of being God's temporal elect. She, too, dabbled in Christian Science, but her religion remained centred round her love for 'Aunt Nancy'. Despite any quarrels, not to love 'Aunt Nancy' was apparently to blaspheme. She was friendly and hospitable and judged me, I think, according to how I conformed or failed to conform to matriarchal standards. My cousin Nancy only paid us visits, but these I looked forward to. I loved her appearance, and the way she dressed, and the lack of importance she seemed to attach to age. She treated people she met on the basis of whether she liked them or whether she disliked them, irrespective of their age, and seemed concerned with *what* people were like rather than *who* they were. She brought into a room a flavour of another, more exciting world, of what I thought of as 'fast' women and 'worldly' men, who lived

uninhibited lives and were not forever concerned with ethics, and whom I felt I would get on with. Also she did not hold my mother in awe, but loved her and sometimes, even, treated her like a child.

Viewing the social life at Cliveden from the level of the school room, it appeared that outside the Langhorne relatives my parents had two categories of friends from each of which they selected a few intimates. The first were the people who had a place in the larger social world. They seemed like natural friends chosen for their company, and they brought into the house a feeling of their own backgrounds as well as a certain worldly flavour which gave their lives a wider and at the same time a more intimate meaning. The second kind consisted of people who were singled out as being worth-while, to whom were attributed merit hinging on some moral purpose, an attribution which seemed obscure to the untutored eye of a child. The 'moral' group consisted of people who appeared only to have an intellectual background, apart from a few professional Christian Scientists who drew their strength from the Mother Church in Boston. Both categories, judging by their conversation, seemed concerned exclusively with social problems. Retrospectively I agree with my earlier view of the 'moral' group. They varied in degree and intelligence but as human beings they were lopsided, dry and prudish, viewing life from the carefully tended parlours of their minds rather than coming out to meet it in the alleys and main streets where it was less regulated and less predictable. Of the non-religious faction in the 'moral' group there were two who epitomized the virtues and quality which my father particularly sought. Professor Hamlyn, whose name I invent, was a nonconformist of vaguely liberal political affiliations, whose particular field of inquiry was agriculture and whose obsession was the ill effect of tubercular-infected milk on the health of the nation. He was one of the few men who drew my father out, enthusiastically, in conversation. They both had considerable knowledge of agricultural theory, they enjoyed the business of applying theory to suit a wider economic doctrine, and their pure

theory, and the non-partisan way in which they applied it to government policy contained an abstract quality, untrammelled by scepticism or, I suspect, at times by much sense of reality. Professor Hamlyn acted on my father like a spiritual cocktail inducing higher thoughts and affirmative notions which transformed the world of politics into a world of reasonable, rational human beings.

The other example of the 'moral' group was a man of different calibre and character. Dr Thomas Jones was a clever man and, as his record shows, a remarkable one. He was the son of a Welsh coalminer, educated on scholarships and his own prodigious reading, and became Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, the confidant of Lloyd George, Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, in which post he wielded considerable power behind the scenes. He was a small man with straight white hair, a prominent nose, a firm and determined mouth and a voice that was rather more resonant than was at first indicated by his quiet and pallid appearance. He had about him a little of the wizard, whose wizardry was Welsh, persuasive and devious. His posture, both political and social, was humble and belied, in my opinion, a certain inner arrogance. Although he had much experience of the world, as viewed on the level of politics and the civil service, he remained in many ways untouched by it. He was a brilliant manipulator of affairs, rather than a participant, a man who had learned to conceal and sublimate his emotions so that they became automatically processed by his intellect and translated into judgements rather than expressions of feeling. In politics he was a non-party man whose affections and prejudices made him a Socialist rather than a Marxist. He combined considerable political knowledge and cunning with a form of outward detachment appropriate to the office of a senior and responsible civil servant. My father always trusted him. My mother, who admired his abilities, never did. He qualified for the 'moral' group on a number of scores. He was ascetic, teetotal and a non-smoker. He was poor, he worked prodigiously and he devoted much of his time to philanthropic causes, in fact as Secretary to the Harkness Trust he became a professional philanthropist.

I mention these two men because they were ingredients in the Cliveden make-up, two men who conformed wittingly or unwittingly to the puritan ethic, an ethic which had little appeal to me as a child, and still less as a grown-up, and which, looking back, I believe was partly attributable for the miscalculations which my parents made over the single most important political issue of their public life.

6

Schooling

To my generation the thought of war hovered like some great ogre which had recently devoured a whole crop of Englishmen and might, if roused, wreak an even greater vengeance on their children. The limbless, the blind, the widowed, and those who were seen to suffer in some other way from its wounds, were known in every village and urban community. The two minutes silence on Remembrance Day, the artificial blood-red poppies and the framed photographs of men in uniform who had died at the front, which were displayed on the chimney pieces of cottage parlours or the side tables of large drawing-rooms, were its constant reminder. In a political household such as ours the emphasis that was given to peace, and the methods by which it could be safeguarded, only succeeded in emphasizing the horror of war. Reflecting the mood of the country, peace became an article of faith which was given the emphasis of a crusade.

Today, when we are faced with the prospect of total annihilation, the anxiety about war is not the same as it was in the twenties and thirties. This, I believe, is because very few of us today believe that we can, by our own actions, do anything to prevent war, which remains something beyond our control, like death itself, the idea of an atomic war being so vast and appalling that we cannot properly envisage it, and have learned, consequently, to live within its shadow.

Despite my father's concern about peace, and the time that he gave to pursuing its ends in politics and in the press, he hoped that I would become a soldier. From the time I first went to Eton he would, periodically, raise this matter, usually in the form of a question about the career I should adopt on leaving university, the assumption being that failing some realization of a sense of

vocation I would go into the army, a cavalry regiment stationed in India being the particular goal. It was perhaps that he saw no obvious alternative for a younger son who showed no aptitude for scholarship or business in a family which was already well enough represented in politics and journalism. In any case my father's puritanism, and the philistine outlook towards the arts which it fostered, made him shrink from the idea of one of his sons seeing himself as an artist. His first-hand experience of artists was limited to Alfred Munnings, who often painted his racehorses and used to visit us, dividing his time between the stables and the dining-room. Munnings was in many ways a more travelled and expansive version of Mr Brooks, less dapper but equally forthright and at home with the habits and study of horse-flesh. One evening, after dinner, with only the men in the dining-room, when conversation had ranged from the League of Nations, to S.B. (Baldwin), to Neville (Chamberlain), to Chatham House, and back again to the League of Nations, my father, realizing that Munnings had been out of the talk, tried to bring him in. 'A.J., where are you going after this?' 'Brighton,' was Munnings's reply. 'What's it like at Brighton?' said my father. 'Oh, you know,' said Munnings, who had been consoling himself with the port, 'a lot of old Jews lying on the beach making love upside down to a lot of young tarts.' There was a nasty hush, rendered even more silent by the stentorian tones of Lionel Curtis asking '*What* did he say?' My father did not know about Brighton, and certainly he wished he had not tried to find out; nor did he see what course the conversation could take after this. Quietly embarrassed he snuffed the candles on the dining-room table, like an umpire at the end of a cricket match drawing stumps. We groped our way to the door in silence.

To my father, painting, which I sometimes practised surreptitiously in my bedroom, was a métier, as was writing, or playing a musical instrument, or being a doctor or a school teacher; but art and artists were terms which covered a multitude of sins. Not that I was ever presumptuous enough to suggest that I was an artist, my early efforts at painting or writing a story being of a

secret and hidden kind, conducted in privacy. Self-expression of this sort had to remain a personal matter, unshared. To reveal it to my family would have been to destroy what there was of my inner sanctuary, to throw it open to public scrutiny and casual commentary. My father believed, in any case, that in some way artists did not pull their weight. In one sense I suspected he was right although I could not share the inflexion he gave to his views. That which affected me most in a positive way and encouraged me to feel that the world was an exciting place was a nascent feeling for beauty, in a flower, or a gesture, or the galloping speed of a dog, or a word image as so ingeniously conjured by my Aunt Norah in her fairy stories. These seemed to me to contain the whole and the essence of life beyond which one need not look. The personal vision, discovered on my own, helped to eradicate the worrying and alarming view of society that was conjured up by constant reminders of my obligations, and of the Christian Science view which declared man was perfect. Who was to say what was perfect? What did it look like to be perfect? Forces inside of me pulled in two directions. This, I think, is shown in the following story of which my Aunt Norah later often reminded me.

After lunch I was sitting in a chair on the terrace holding in my hand a tulip which I was studying, a precocious aesthete surrounded at a distance by an ostensibly extrovert happy-go-lucky group of the family. I would have been about seven years old. My Aunt Norah, who had a poetic feminine quality which she was best able to translate to children, approached my chair. 'Aunt Norah, don't you think a tulip is a very dignified flower?' I asked her. She was drawn by this remark and by my use of such a long word, which indeed rather impressed me, and leant over my shoulder to share my view of the flower. There was a certain tension of beauty, in the tulip and my prospect of it, and in the caressing attitude of my favourite Aunt. 'Aunt Norah, will you give me a kiss?' This she did, but at the moment of doing it some devil inside me, aware of the private and precious quality of this encounter which could so easily be mocked, got the upper hand. This was probably the first time that I betrayed a woman's trust.

As she turned her face to mine I turned and bit her, ashamed of the moment of truth and what seemed to me its squeamishness, and parodying my feelings so as to turn them into a burlesque, only partly redeemed by the incongruity of the gesture which gave it a kind of harsh funniness. This inability to come to terms with myself—the most important process of all in growing up—was to land me in a number of impossible situations.

As I grew up, and my esteem for the artist became more grounded in knowledge, I accorded him the highest place in society, a place which he only retains by a sense of dedication, hard work and magic—if I may use the term magic to embrace a whole range of aesthetic sensibility and awareness which belong to the creative artist in any medium, and contains an element of something which cannot be analysed and defined in words. Nevertheless the artist avoids many of the responsibilities carried by other men. In compensation for his exacting life, often unaccompanied by any outward recognition of success, he is to a large extent his own master, doing work that he enjoys, in contrast to the majority of men who find themselves compelled, out of necessity or other external pressures, to take up work for which they have no particular vocation. Although his role may be neither more evasive nor more heroic than that of a crossing-sweeper, I would be hard-pressed to argue that it is not more interesting. The soldier's life, as pointed out to me, was a life clearly set out in which, in a traditional and gentlemanly way, the young man served the needs of his country. My father decided, then, that once I was educated I would become a soldier, a subaltern stationed in India (in contrast to what he depicted as the fashionable fop who, barracked at Windsor or Knightsbridge, decorated the London ballrooms), a leader of men who would enjoy recognized forms of sport and pleasure and who, by his posting, would find himself far away from the seats of idleness and temptation. It never once crossed my mind that I would be a soldier. The claims of peace as a creed made me regard the army in much the same light as a criminal regards prison, a punishment house from which he must at all times try to escape. This business

of a military career became a game in which at times I would stand obstinate, and at others, when in danger of being cornered, make some concessions, pretending to examine the whole range of military possibility while avoiding committing myself to any solution. My tactics were those of evasion, a manœuvre which most children learn instinctively, a head-on clash with a parent of strong will being an encounter in which the child invariably comes off second best. Periodically my father would seek advice about various regiments and their prospects of going to India and would with, as I thought, a feigned casualness, pass his information on to me under the guise of conversation. However he played his part honourably, and never committed either of us publicly to the idea of my military career. It was a private tussle between him and me, and one which he had no chance of winning until the war settled the matter for both of us.

In the meantime the young military idea—if at the risk of caricaturing my parent I can describe myself in this way—had to be educated. Governesses, though carried forward as a supplementary boost to education in the holidays, were outgrown, and in the pattern of young Englishmen who belonged to what was still, but only just, the ruling class, I was sent away at the age of eight to join David at a preparatory school in Sussex, and entered into a five-year episode which most Englishmen understandably choose to forget as quickly as they can. David's innate kindness and humour made the process of indoctrination easier than it would otherwise have been, although my misery, which I was able to conceal in the day-time, became unleashed at night. I began to have nightmares, and fits of screaming in my sleep, so violent that they woke half the school. They continued to haunt me for several years.

The habit of sending children away to preparatory schools at the age of eight, a habit which dates from the last century and which since then has applied, with only a few exceptions, to all families who have been able to afford the privilege, may be excused on two scores: one is the convenience of the parents, who are relieved of the task of caring for their children for the greater

part of each year: the other is the belief that children should at an early age discover for themselves how dreadful, bleak and noisy life can be; added to which there is the hope that, provided the children do not acquire a taste for raucous living, they learn to respect the quieter and more reflective aspects of their home lives. The system can be justified on the grounds of the survival of the fittest (a far-fetched theory which I suppose can apply to a society which is breeding a ruling class), of those best fitted to learn early in life what to reject and what to accept, and to learn this in a school which usually accords the highest honours to those who show the least aptitude for independent thought. Children, however, make a habit of surviving practically anything: being infinitely pliable and resilient they can be taught to accept that what was bad enough for their fathers cannot be too bad for them, and thus the system survives. The school in Sussex was run by a Church of England parson who, for not strictly theological reasons, welcomed the children of Christian Science parents. Its impact on a succession of small boys, at least those from the happier homes, was sudden and traumatic, like being thrown into an ice-cold bath straight out of a warm bed.

This school, an English phenomenon not unlike others of its kind, taught me little and moulded me scarcely at all, but rather than discuss it peremptorily I will apply the lens of my microscope briefly, and not too searchingly, to its headmaster; not because he was a remarkable man, but because, eccentric though he appears, his predicament was typical of his profession and calling. Our headmaster completed his education at Cambridge where he gained a half blue for association football; he then took religious orders but came to the conclusion that his true vocation was teaching boys, and in due course he became a member of that small circle of dedicated men, the headmasters of English preparatory schools. His vocation demanded of him both selflessness and imagination, two attributes which he possessed. He was married and had one child, but his duties meant that he spent most of his life in the company of small boys, an experience which in itself can be retarding and which, in order to be toler-

able, is often assisted by a worldly innocence not usually found in a man of mature years. He presumably loved small boys: he would have had to in order to do his job properly but, unlike one or two members of his staff, his inclinations were not manifestly homosexual. Like an elderly time-worn child he became a senior child in a permanent hierarchy of children. By the time I reached him his physiognomy and manner were showing signs of stress. He resembled more than anything else a large and kindly monkey with sad but trusting eyes and a troubled brow. His simian appearance was due not entirely to living with children. His sallow skin, wide nostrils, and large protruding ears were gifts of heritage which were accentuated by his method of parting his hair in the middle of his head and brushing it horizontally in line with his eyebrows. To offset a certain dignity conveyed by his bearing and his searching and almost soulful gaze he wore, not the cleric's black stock and dog collar, but a check shirt and a large bow tie, a happy, almost raffish touch which, contrasting with his solemn demeanour, lent him something of the incongruity of the monkey in the zoo who, from looking like some ancient and puzzled philosopher engaged on a mathematical problem of vast complexity, will suddenly turn somersaults or imitate his captors by placing on his head a paper bag in the manner of a hat. Indeed, the contrast in style between the clerical hair-parting and the check shirt and bow tie, the contrast of the pulpit and the promenade on Brighton pier, indicated two sides of his character of which the happier and more innate showed itself during the rehearsals of school theatricals which occupied much of our spare time. On these occasions, shaking off his cares like a cloak, he would spring to life and display a satirical command of both drama and tragedy, revealing flashes of humour of an original sort. His recompense for dedicating his life in this way was that he was liked and trusted by the boys placed in his charge. The circumstances of his demise which, like his life, had a tragic-comic quality, showed the generous unguarded side of his nature.

Some of the boys in his school came from fairly poor homes, the homes of professional people who had to struggle in order to

give their children a private education, and some of the parents discovered either that they could not pay the fees, or discovered that the headmaster's kindly nature did not compel them to do so in cases where they pleaded hardship. This, coupled with the fact that he entrusted his financial affairs to his butler who robbed him mercilessly, resulted in his falling into debt. At first the debt was relieved by a loan from one or two of the parents and the mortgaging of his school buildings; but the root of the trouble, his total lack of business sense and his disinclination to think in terms of money, led him further into debt. He then decided to lift himself out of his troubles by gambling. In his innocence he trusted the sporting side of his nature to counteract his lack of method in accountancy. He had probably never been on a racecourse in his life but he began studying the racing form in the sporting pages of the press, hoping that the long shot, the eight to one dark horse known only to his racing guide, would redeem his finances and, as he regarded it, his honour. In this he failed, and the crushing effect of his failure was such that he died a man broken in spirit as well as in pocket. If only, at an earlier age, he had followed his instincts rather than his precepts perhaps he would never have been a headmaster, entrusted with the responsibility of looking after ninety children. He might have been an actor or, with a little experience, a professional punter; but his life would have been happier and his contribution would have been none the less for that.

Our headmaster was a man pulled in several directions. In order to comply with the contract he had made with the Christian Science parents he engaged three masters who, other than conforming to what they termed the Movement, had no qualifications for teaching. These were offset by one or two elderly men who were properly professional in their task. He engaged two matrons: one to administer castor oil and the other to apply the treatment of silent prayer. Every morning over his clothes he would don the surplice and cassock of his order and conduct a short Church of England service which all the school attended. His conscience tied him in knots. On Sunday evenings he used to deliver a talk

to all the boys, a confused parable with some moral end in view in which he appeared as a man walking in glue, struggling with every step, dragging himself forward, onward, inch by inch from a quagmire of doubt, a quagmire which, he indicated, was partly of our making.

Ignorant as we were of his financial dilemma and its causes we did not see the hidden truth behind his remarks. Other than this general pictorial impression of a man weighed down by trouble, these talks were utterly incomprehensible and were touched off by the slightest incident.

Before I left, our headmaster tried to explain to me the facts of life, the phrase and misnomer given to the explanation of adult sexual behaviour. He gave me no hint as to what he was talking about, leaving me puzzled by the interest which he suddenly assumed I took in flowers and bees. At Eton my housemaster, during my first week, tried a similar indoctrination. He was a bachelor and a mathematician, and he explained sex in terms of diagrams—spheres, cubes and right angles. It was impossible. Mating by mathematical calculation? It could not be. The mystery deepened. Had my headmaster talked of love, which most small boys experience for each other at some point in their development, I might have understood what he was driving at, although had he talked of love coupled with sex I might have been shocked, the exciting awareness of love being to me something that had to be sexless in order to retain its essential pristine cleanliness. The sexual organ was used for urinating. How could this sewage system be associated with my highest feelings? This was an unrealistic view of life hardened like steel by what I had been taught about God's, and therefore my, need for 'perfection', but it is probably shared by many children before they reach the age of puberty. There remained in front of me a great gulf between urgent physical sensations, headstrong and intoxicating, and the quality of love and companionship, a gulf which was not breached until, leaving schools behind me, I was able to explore and mix in the society of women whose context and virtues and lack of virtues denied the validity of my childish notions.

About the time that I left this school I was vaguely aware that my mother was a famous person. As well as being the first woman to take her seat in Parliament she symbolized, throughout the world, the new place that women were making for themselves in public life. Inevitably she attracted a great deal of publicity because her like had not before been seen. She was a rebel and a Conservative and a feminist, a new kind of firebrand who managed at the same time to conduct a social life at Cliveden on such a grand scale that even that attracted attention. She was as much a household word as later became—though for different reasons—Mrs Roosevelt, Greta Garbo and Marilyn Monroe. I knew she was famous, although I did not then understand why this should be. I assumed my parents to be powerful people whose words were a form of law. At Eton I found, much to my relief, that this was not quite the case.

It was with a sense of release that I went on to Eton, sad only at leaving Jakie behind me, glad at the prospect of joining David. It was a familiar place, one of our two shopping towns, in which in the holidays we went to get our hair cut at Jeffry's, and buy our shoes at Gains' the bootmaker. But more important, Eton was part of the bigger world in which, although dimly, I envisaged my future and my salvation. Eton was a microcosm of the outside world, harbouring among its twelve hundred boys young men of nearly every description: scholars, laggards, toughs and aesthetes, gentlemen and cads, Roman Catholics, Jews, even Hindus and one Buddhist, a delightful and dapper Siamese—Prince Briabongse—whom I sat next to in school my first year, and who, it was falsely rumoured, was already married and had two children of his own. Little by little some of the shackles of religion and inflated social conscience came to assume less formidable proportions. Laughter, choral laughter or laughter solitary or in duet, usually produced by the contrast of the formal conception of what one was supposed to be doing as distinct from the personal knowledge of what one *was* doing became temporarily the great emetic, purging if not one's sins at least the sense of sin.

Until I was about fifteen work appeared to me to be little more

than an obligation, as something which I was expected to do not so much because of the learning it imparted, or because of its value in awakening curiosity and stretching the mind, but rather because doing well at work and getting good reports at the end of each term meant conforming to some standard of perfection as set by my father, qualifying me presumably for the society of Professor Hamlyn, the milk man, or Dr Thomas Jones, the Welsh man. Indeed a bleak prospect. Then, as some of the Puritanism became whittled down, work became less and less a matter of moral virtue and I began for the first time to find it interesting, and to discover a new satisfaction in following a subject through its unpredictable stages, a private venture which had a point to it irrespective of examination results which, in turn, improved in ratio to the extent to which the moral strictures became silenced.

I enjoyed Eton, and found there a life independent of my home life and with it a feeling of emancipation. There for the first time I became part of a bigger world which granted me its recognition of success, a qualified success which expressed the more gregarious side of my nature. Success came chiefly through the criterion of games, and games were for me an acute form of pleasure, football in the winter and cricket in the summer. Of the two sports I preferred the Eton version of football, which is very much an individual's game, and before I had finished with schooling I used to play 'short' for the Field, an enviable position which gave one an opportunity of both volleying the ball or 'dribbling' and running with it. Had it not been for an act of false heroism I would have been given my 'Field'. I can still remember the ludicrous moment that led to my downfall and prevented me representing Eton in one sport. Towards the end of a fiercely contested match the ball was kicked a long way past me, over my head, and from the middle of the opposing pack, some forty yards in the distance, emerged the rampaging figure of Fred Coleridge, a junior master, charging towards me like a young rhinoceros. He weighed about six stone more than me and my first thought was to side step and trip him up as he shot past. But there were too many people watching. Vanity, more than pride, impelled me to take the hero's

part and try and knock him over. It was folly, which I realized in the last split second before I was bowled down like a ninepin, a folly that was repaid by a painful limp which made it difficult for me to break out of a walk for the rest of the term.

Cricket, which in the summer absorbed most of my waking hours, in the end became something of an ordeal. At first, hitting the ball and having other people run after it was the purest form of self-indulgence I had experienced. Outwitting the bowler, driving the ball along the ground or up in the air, or deflecting it behind the wicket, represented a form of poetry in motion, an ephemeral art that demanded only practice and concentration. But I was ambitious. I wanted to play for the eleven; and I used to spend tortuous hours before each match hoping that I would have that little bit of luck which, as an impetuous opening batsman, I invariably needed. It was absurd to take a game so seriously; and during my last summer, only when I knew I had failed in achieving my ambition, could I once again enjoy playing cricket as a pastime.

Eton temporarily fortified me in the knowledge that I could belong to a wider society on some terms even if not exactly those of my own choosing, and it was a society which paid scant regard to the cautionary attitudes at Cliveden—attitudes which disapproved of so much that others regarded as natural custom. With flying colours in school certificate, colours for football and for cricket (and even a colour for the Wall game which I played enthusiastically but whose rules I never understood), captain of my house and a member of the Eton Society I felt in a position to flout parental authority. After all my father had, in his day, been a celebrity at school. He, I persuaded myself, must know what it meant. This view represented, in fact, a *faut tirage*. My struggle to rid myself of parental attitudes, to find my own true centre from which to operate, lay ahead of me; but after Eton it became increasingly a matter within myself, not directly involving my parents, a struggle which lasted many years and suffered various interruptions, but which was worth any degree of time and pains.

The game of challenging and defeating parents, a process which

is quite necessary to the development of the adolescent young man in a number of families, was, I discovered, more complex, more an affair of self-knowledge aided by determination, than could be expressed merely by waving in their faces the flags of school office which could be dismissed as mere symbols of childhood. What I saw, though only dimly, at Eton was that I could somehow, I knew not yet how, divest myself of my parents' attitudes which had formed part of my childhood's indoctrination; and not only that I could but that it was imperative that I should, if I were to have any true life of my own. My brother David, who had left Eton shortly after I went there and whose life was taking a series of highly experimental turns, saw this too. In my immediate family either we revolted and discarded the values given us in childhood to return to pick them up later, selectively, recognizing them for what they were; or we blinded through, outwardly conforming, harbouring a conception of values never wholly acceptable to us, borrowed from our parents rather than acquired by us individually. Of the choice that lay ahead the latter was the least satisfactory, spelling to my mind a kind of death in life however decorated it might be by conventional worldly insignia. My sudden flash in the pan of success and liberation was in turn supported by masks, the masks of casualness and unconcern which young men wear to conceal their deeper feelings and misgivings. I also carried away from Eton, almost unconsciously, engraved on my memory two quotations which were not quotations in the proper sense but were phrases used in teaching Latin syntax, phrases of no particular importance in our curriculum but which, since they were imprinted on my mind, were significant to me. The first was a Latin sentence made up to demonstrate the irregular use of a verb. It read: 'Quod non est simulo dissimuloque quod est' which literally translated means 'I deny the existence of that which exists', a comment which, at some deeper level of consciousness, I must have accepted as applying to myself. The second one was: 'Achilles ejecit sua inertia', 'Achilles threw off his inertia'. Achilles, after initial success as a warrior, took to his tent, to idleness and the company of

his women and then one day, as I remembered it, saw that the moment was ripe for resuming the role of warrior. I have never looked up this reference to Achilles or its context. In as far as I applied it to myself it was enough that Achilles would emerge again, reborn through rest and the reassurance of love, and there was no point in detracting from the symbol by discovering what difficulties lay ahead of the hero. Difficulties would come, of their own accord, from unexpected quarters. What was needed was faith and at some point, however tardy, tenacity which relies on faith; and when victory came, however personal, irrespective of how, or when, or where, even if in the closing moments of death, even if unshared by anyone else, it would be triumphant and worth every inch of the way. Victory, this nebulous victory, meant making some sense and order out of the confusion that my life was becoming.

This view of a dilemma, of learning to think for oneself, of unlearning a political or religious or social indoctrination, in essence a personal problem, becomes in time more than a personal problem. When, later, I tried to translate this into political thought inevitably I found myself sceptical of purely political solutions, and particularly of party doctrines which outline situations in terms of black and white, of right and wrong; and I carried a particular mistrust for those public men, facile of speech, who preface their appeals to the electorate on the score that their policies will do the electorate good. As a rough and ready rule, cutting across party affiliations, my expressed view became that if a politician promises that his policies will be good for you, rather than be merely expedient, then vote against him—a view which later hardly justified me retaining my position as a Member of Parliament. With the larger part of the world engaged in a system which decreed that the state, its authority and its values, should rule supreme in the life of man, man without God or faith or hope in anything other than the prospect of material gain, I came increasingly to believe that salvation could only come through the struggle of individuals who, finding their strength within themselves, could learn to form their own judgements of their societies

and their rulers. Perhaps the artist, provided he has the fortitude to engage life, men such as Pasternak, seeing life at many levels, would emerge as the real hero of the age, able to express the importance of man as a species, of the individual who must resist the tide of political theory and nationalist sentiment.

Christian Science, whose formal observances I had discarded, still played an odd role, the part of good-natured fool always tripping up the performers in our family affairs. My eldest brother Bill had left Eton before I arrived there, but before he left he had the distinction of coxing the Eton eight at Henley. Eton was always a strong rowing school and contended for the Ladies' Plate. It occurred to me, as a small boy, that Bill whose job it was to steer the boat from the stern end, could not play more than a subsidiary part, though an honourable one, in securing victory. But I remember, when the holidays came round and we all assembled at Sandwich which was where the real religious punishment was inflicted, learning that this was far from the case. Eton had successfully contested the first round, but was beaten in the second round; and defeat, according to the view advanced by my mother, lay squarely on Bill's shoulders. Short of sabotage what had he done? What technicalities of coxmanship, comprehensible to his mother, had he neglected? The answer was forthcoming. On the first day, before taking to the river, Bill had remembered to do his Bible lesson and all had gone well. But on the second day Bill had neglected this duty, and in so doing had sacrificed the efforts of eight lusty young men all of them pulling their hearts out. It was fantasy but fantasy presented as fact. The second incident concerned myself. While playing cricket for Lower Club at Eton, after an hour of sweating in the field, I sat around in my wet shirt, caught a chill and, as a result of this, developed pleurisy and pneumonia. I was whisked home and spent a tormented three weeks lying on a couch in my mother's bedroom hanging between life and death. My condition was not only precarious but painful as it was only with acute discomfort to my heart that I could draw breath. Brother Jakie, on leave for the Winchester match, nearly finished me off by sitting on my couch and making me

laugh so uncontrollably that I thought my last moment had come. Christian Science nurses and a practitioner were rushed to the scene but my condition continued to deteriorate. My parents became really anxious and finally summoned a doctor who arrived, empty-handed, and stared at me from a distance, like a detached spectator viewing the victim of a road accident. Anyway I pulled round, thanks, as I was constantly reminded, to the prayers of the Movement. But now who was the doctor, who had appeared so silently only to vanish again? I made inquiries and discovered that he was a doctor who had, some years back, given up medicine, taken up some other profession and was interested in Christian Science. He was brought in as a sort of compromise, allowed to make his appraisal by glance provided he did not attempt any laying on of hands.

The vivid picture of Eton that I carried away, and used nostalgically, was not a sea of top hats, or blazers, nor the painfully funny episodes in College Chapel, still retained in my memory like particular episodes in the early Charlie Chaplin films, episodes so preposterous and spontaneous that to see them again is to see them afresh; nor the equally hilarious situations fostered by the Officers Training Corps, in which I was little more than a buffoon. My immediate memory is of the mist and winter twilight; of friendships honoured and retained; of the absurdity of some of the masters and of the kindness and humanity of others; of a gipsy standing on the corner of Keats Lane, holding over his shoulder a string of teal suspended from a stick like an onion-seller, a symbol of freedom and the excitement of the outlaw; of the anticipation of a fire in my room and the companionable solitude enjoyed elsewhere by grown-up men in London clubs; of the impressive figure of Dr Alington, the headmaster, grey-haired and glorious like some exhibitionist saint who paraded the school in an overcoat made of polar bear skin, and who preached better than any man I have ever heard; of the dimmer figure of Claud Elliott, his successor, whose light I assumed was concealed somewhere under his mortarboard; of Jobie, who sold to the thirsty what was rumoured to be urine only thinly disguised as lemonade

from a basket he carried on to Agar's Plough; of a certain Clark who left Eton owing Jobie thirty pounds for urine and jujubes, the latter being purchasable wholesale at twopence the pound, thus leaving the question open which was the greater rascal Jobie or the boy who robbed him; of the Reverend C. O. Bevan, who drank a thimbleful of iodine every morning before early school; of Jack Upcott, whose genius was teaching Elizabethan history, whose punishments were arbitrary and marvellously unfair and who would forgive any boy who could make him laugh. And of sounds: the call of 'boy' and the tumbling cascade of feet; the swell of choral chant, 'decani' and 'cantoris' picked up on one side of Chapel and thrown back to the other; and of other quieter sounds, the occasional clobber of a pony pulling a cart, and the eerie and unmusical cry of 'coal' from a street vendor, sounds even then out of fashion, sounds which belonged to an age that had been.

The beauty of Eton was in its restraint, the distilled quality handed down by successive generations, each reflecting a little of the pattern of the last, emphasized and rendered more poignant by the sudden bursts of rowdiness. I left Eton determined never to return, there being nothing more pathetic than the example of old boys continually revisiting the scenes of their former triumphs. I was ready to leave. Ahead of me lay the world, of men and women, and the notion of women, their form and their touch, was becoming a torture, confined as I had been to a monastic existence for most of the year. I had learned one lesson. Parental love, as it faced me, was at best a two-edged sword.

Two days before I was due to leave I telephoned Lee at Cliveden and asked for a car, the Ford car that was practically common property, to be left outside my tutor's. For a whole day it stood at the end of Common Lane, inviting, unattended, waiting to take me away. On the final day before the term finished there was nothing to do, other than eat a leaving breakfast with my friends and say a few farewells. At dinner I told my tutor that after saying goodbye round the house I would like to leave. He raised no objection. A small boy called Phillips divulged that I was his

hero and asked me for a relic, a sock, a comb, an article of toilet, something I had used. A little taken aback, I told him to take anything he found in my room. Phillips was one of the only two boys I had beaten while I was head of my house. I had suffered such agonies of suspense as a small boy myself, in waiting all day to be caned, that when in turn I had to administer this punishment I carried it out in the quickest possible time. Phillips, on that occasion, had appeared in the library and I had told him to bend over a chair. This was an awe-inspiring moment for the recipient, enacted in front of the gaze of two or three of the senior boys, but on this occasion my anxiety had been nearly equal to his. In my endeavour to perform the task quickly, with my first shot I had, on the back-lift, hit and extinguished the electric light. The room was plunged in darkness, I wanted to laugh but restrained myself sufficiently to tell the victim to leave. I took the matter to my tutor. Surely now we could say that justice had been done? As with the murderer whom the rope of the gallows fails to hang, surely the turn of fortune should make her own decree? My tutor had told me to finish the job. Phillips once more resumed his undignified posture, and the whip crack of my cane, finding its target, told me that I was striking the concealed padding of a glossy magazine. Time, in this instance, had issued a partial reprieve.

I left my house at half-past nine, started the car, and just short of Dorney Common stopped at a public house. It seemed the occasion for a glass of port and a cigar, a cheap variety of which the proprietor supplied. I sipped my port in silence. After handing over some silver and asking the barmaid to keep the change I resumed my journey in dawdling mood, puffing on the cigar. I was leaving school behind. I was driving into the future. I was entirely responsible for my own actions. I was a man. Perhaps I was a natural leader of men? I was also in a reverie; I was driving on the wrong side of the road. Suddenly it was on me, the familiar blue bus, glittering with all its lights, the bus that plied between the Bath Road and Eton. It swerved suddenly to avoid a head-on collision, and there flashed past me a sea of ladies' hats,

men in cloth caps, a uniformed driver at the wheel. As I braked I saw the bus disappear down a grass incline, then right itself, then with the momentum of its fall, jolt and bump to a standstill in the field, a series of impacts which extinguished its lights. Twenty peaceful passengers had been shaken up like dice. I waited, peering out of the window of the Ford. There was a long and ominous silence. Had they all been stunned? I pictured these unsuspecting people flung to the floor, hats jammed over their faces, people's false teeth embedded in the back of other people's necks, groping, struggling, kicking. Quiet, respectable, unsuspecting people trapped in a private *götterdammerung*. And then its passengers started to cackle, quietly at first, like hens waking with the light. From a murmur everyone seemed to talk at once. A few angry voices started to shout. Other voices, with country accents, indicated that their owners had suffered nothing worse than shock. I felt amazed at all that had happened in such a short time. I had only gone a little way into the world, and I had made a startling impact on other people's lives. I could not face up to the consequences of my actions as a hero should. Putting the Ford into gear I made off as quickly as I could.

7

Learning

There are phases in the life of a young man when he needs to drift, simply to absorb life through his senses without in any way trying to force the pace. The need for this comes either early or late. The young man is growing and groping his way into manhood, gaining sufficient confidence to throw off the mannerisms borrowed from his parents and masters, so as to acquire characteristics that he can more properly call his own. If he has scholastic ambitions, and feels a need to drift, then these ambitions may be temporarily checked. He will probably, if he is fortunate, discover later that he still has time in which to catch up. Unless he allows himself at some stage in his development a period of grace, in which simply to imbibe, to grow and to expand, his scholarship will only be bought at a price. If he never takes his nose out of his books, or if he concerns himself exclusively with deep and serious problems, he may develop intellectually; but in other ways he will remain malformed, a little lopsided, like a man whose limbs are not evenly in scale. The young man may, on the other hand, never entertain ambitions of an intellectual sort. He may never feel the need to find out more about himself or other people. In this case he will find himself in step with a great many others who never grow up at all, and to him my personal theory of evolution will not apply.

This view, of the need to mature leisurely, is controversial. Some of the best scholars denounce it as heresy. Anxious schoolmasters and fretful parents regard it as the thin end of the wedge. Life is packed, they will point out, with lazy, useless men who have never learned to work, whose intellects have remained flabby, unfit to comprehend the important issues of the day. But life is also staffed with some intelligent men who have never

learned how to live, whose emotions remain sealed. The lounge lizard and the dedicated, unrelenting scholar represent two extremes, the necessary port and starboard buoys in the flood of our society which indicate the most freely navigable course that lies somewhere in between.

At Oxford I was, in my first two years, cheated of the opportunity to drift. It was not the fault of the university. Young men by the score did little else than amuse themselves while keeping their tutors and examiners at bay. In my last year my examiners caught up with me and I had to work hard. My chance to cruise gently, to absorb life through the pores of the skin, to grow effortlessly in different ways, still lay ahead. Its process was inescapable. I had to return to find it another day. Inside me I carried a dynamo, an energy machine, not yet properly geared, which acted as a mincing machine rather than a propellant which could carry me on a set course. The voice of conscience, distorted by incessant parental adjurations to do better than my best, allowed me no peace. My experience was not unique. It was merely a matter of degree. We were, I believe, a generation of young men uncertain of our values, echoing a little of the past and groping out towards what lay ahead. Our parents, those of them who had survived the First World War, had returned to a society that was tired, restless, and no longer certain of where it stood. The standards which prevailed before the 1914 war, standards of conduct based on people's knowledge of their place and role in life, had been largely obliterated. The sons of this generation were consequently pulled in one of two ways: either to revert to the values of their father's generation, values which were partly understood though not popularly respected, or to launch themselves forward into the tide of left-wing movements and ideas.

At Oxford in the nineteen-thirties the young men who dubbed themselves 'left-wing' were experimenting with ideas, inspired partly by a romantic, self-induced notion about what they supposed was happening inside Russia. The more extreme, who thought of themselves as Communists, were, for the most part,

the romantic element who had to patrol well beyond the bounds of the accepted traditional order. Others were moved by a very reasonable concern for the plight of the unemployed in the coalfields and industrial areas at home. To them the Labour Party represented the cause of the working man whose position was precarious. The undergraduates who, equally fervently, represented an extreme right-wing view, resisting all notions of change, had somehow to reconcile their views to the prevailing conditions which allowed real privilege to exist, side by side with hunger, despair and other evidence of appalling poverty. Behind us rested the whole history and tradition of English life, and the heroic and destructive epic of the war; ahead of us loomed some revolutionary concept of government, based on a theoretical ideal. There remained the prospect of a further shattering war which would require of the nation all the traditional feelings of patriotism and sacrifice.

There were several explanations why many of the more intelligent young men, who at university were dealing primarily with theory, proclaimed allegiance to the Socialist Party. My conscience was troubled. I could not find my place. I skirted the deeper issue of politics and confined my serious social inquiries to love and sex. My investigations took me increasingly in the direction of London, away from the academic life.

During my first year I had still to discover that man's friend the horse was my natural enemy. All my life at home, as a matter of habit, I had ridden through the woods at Cliveden and over the tame and well-gated Garth country. I had yet to encounter the full horror of hunting people (as distinct from the people who could merely claim that they hunted): their maniacal quality, their short tempers, their hard-bitten women and the extent to which horses, hounds, and hunting, comprised the whole of their lives. The hunting set in Leicestershire before the war probably regarded themselves as part of an élite, representing all that was manly, unintellectual, Conservative, patriotic, or, as they would have phrased it, 'normal', in English life. I hired a horse and hunted with the Pytchley and the Quorn, and came to the con-

clusion that they were a collection of freaks. I had read Surtees and Whyte Melville, and the idea of being on a horse, following a hunt, or leading it for that matter, appealed to me as a venture and a challenging pastime. Oxford had a hunting set, mostly centred round the Bullingdon Club of which I was a member. Most of them were casual about their hunting, although there were a few, grim, barking young men, capable of no general conversation, who possessed a detailed knowledge of horse and hound technicalities—matters which I deemed, in a supercilious way, were better left to grooms, or horses, or hounds. Perhaps there was left in me a little of William Waldorf, a lofty grandeur which implied that hunting might mean one thing to the majority but for myself I would meet it on my own terms, in my own way, and as I pleased. My romantic aspirations to keep up with the chase were never fully put to the test since the horse, the natural creature in this company, put an end to my enthusiasm which, coupled to my incompetence, landed us in a series of accidents and me finally in a hospital bed with concussion of the brain.

The horse and I enjoyed few inspired moments together, and I prefer to remember hunting as seen through the spectrum of a friend of mine, James McDonnell, who was in every sense the antithesis of the popular conception of a hunting man. His experience in this field was limited, I think precisely limited, to two days; but it had about it a wild and uncontrived quality, singular and personal to his nature, which for a few brief moments reduced this somewhat formalized pastime not only to a farce, which was easy enough, but lent it a quality which I felt it had lost since the first days when men joined company to chase an animal which they could not eat. (The hunting fraternity defend their sport today for almost every reason other than the only valid one, which is that they enjoy it; but not even they, with the anti-bloodsport league in full pursuit, have suggested that they chase the fox because they want to eat it.)

James McDonnell was the nephew of Angus McDonnell, the friend of Mr Langhorne in Virginia, and had much of his uncle's humour and natural exuberance. He came up to Oxford from

Eton the same year as I did, a young man with many friends who was singularly unimpressed by his own popularity, carrying few of the conventional marks of the Etonian but exuding a friendliness and tolerance, and intolerance, that emanated not from school but from a gentlemanly nature heightened by an Irish background. Indeed the conventional behaviour of his colleagues often produced in him a quizzical expression, as if he were ready to laugh but reluctant to comprehend their more stilted and less imaginative behaviour. He fell in with the Oxford life as well and no better than I did, and in order to escape the forfeit of his own popularity, and to find the measure of solitude which he required, he took the step of going into lodgings on the outskirts of the city with an Indian, an uncomprehending student, whose lack of humour and racial sense of injury transformed the university into nothing more than an historical and geographical expression. In this way James avoided the mob of Etonians who, after a good dinner, liked to visit the rooms of their friends. As James explained, the beauty of the Indian was that, like a tiger, he prowled all night and slept all day, and it was not even necessary to meet him. James decided he would like to hunt in much the same way as a man, who has never touched a piano, might decide that he would like to play one of the more difficult movements in a Chopin concert. He would like to hunt, to jump, to gallop, to crash across country. He speculated on the idea of irate men cursing him as he headed the chase, with the hounds baying at his heels. And 'Tally ho!', the rallying cry of fox-hunters the world over, should be used at the meet, as soon as the party was assembled, a password bellowed to the accompaniment of a stirrup cup.

Fox-hunting, an English tradition wherever it is conducted, requires of those who can afford it a stylish though outmoded form of dress which, working from bottom to top, consists of top boots and spurs; breeches either white or dun-coloured depending on the colour of the coat which is either scarlet or black; stock, an article of neck-wear difficult to tie properly; and top hat or bowler hat again depending on the colour of the coat. The overall effect, when well cut and well worn, is elegant, and when

ill-fitting or wrongly assorted looks ridiculous. Undergraduates usually wore black rather than scarlet but were expected to wear one or the other as a matter of manners and form. James, from the pile of clothes that made up his wardrobe, arrived at a compromise: pyjamas worn underneath grey flannel trousers, a sweater, a jacket and a scarlet tie, and a bowler hat usually reserved for visits to London. The enchantment of hunting, then, lay in our thoughts and conversation rather than in our deeds, which produced inevitably a sense of anticlimax, the wide gulf young men experience between intention and performance. Of gallantry there lacked nothing, but it is impossible for someone who has never sat on a horse to ride it full tilt at a fence and not be unseated. The element of farce, which I referred to, was underlined in an unexpected fashion. The cap, or fee, required of undergraduates with the Heythrop Hunt was a ten-shilling note, handed to the secretary as the field moved through the first gate. James's hired horse in an unguarded movement had seized this prize out of its rider's hand and it was only with difficulty that it was extricated from his jaws, torn and chewed and covered with foam. It was also only with difficulty that the secretary was persuaded to accept this nasty-looking mess as legal tender, a difficulty not immediately overcome by James's apology, accompanied by uncontrollable laughter which led the secretary to suspect, in spite of the evidence of our appearance, that he was the one who looked absurd.

When he came down from Oxford James went to work in Brighton, and later married, and we saw less of each other than I should have liked. When the war started he joined the Norfolk Regiment, was taken prisoner at Dunkirk, and spent five years in a prisoner-of-war camp, and when he was released went to live in Ireland. By force of circumstances a friendship was broken. This is always a matter for regret; and yet broken friendships are better than those retained on the false assumption that the pattern of youth is constant and constantly carried on and reciprocated into middle age. Friendship which in the war became severed by death still retains a quality and a meaning, one-sided though

it may be; but I still shudder when, as occasionally happens, I meet someone whom I knew twenty years ago who fixed me then in his mind's eye as wild and carefree (which was the kind of air I assumed) and who feels that friendship must insist that he recognizes these qualities in me today. Is this hearty form of camaraderie particularly English, or do Frenchmen and Chinese suffer from the same thing? The rebuttal is inevitable. A myopic look (I hope) comes over me. Better to be thought deaf or mentally deficient than coldly stand-offish.

During the first long vacation, at the instigation of Lionel Curtis who was an old back-woodsman not only in the precincts of All Souls, I went to Canada to join two undergraduates from Toronto University and travel by canoe through the wooded country of Northern Ontario. I persuaded Edward Bird, a friend of mine at New College, to come with me. He turned out to be the ideal companion. Whereas I had a certain North American instinct, which could differentiate even then between a Canadian and someone from the United States, Edward's more essentially English gaze accepted all North Americans uncritically as the friendly castaways from his own native shores, and his view was translated into a scepticism and humour that is not taught at an early age in North American colleges. Willing to look at anything or anybody twice before forming an opinion he remained impervious to any form of group enthusiasm or to the cult of physical hardship and endurance which our Canadian companions particularly esteemed. It was possible in 1935 to reach by canoe and portage certain lakes which were unmapped and seldom visited, to experience a feeling of remoteness and adventure stimulated by the knowledge that our resources were only those we carried—an experience, when first met with, so thrilling, and so in accord with natural instinct, that it can make the regulated and safeguarded life of civilization appear a little insipid. The realization of physical accomplishment, uncharted territory, and sleep in the open air induced by extremes of exhaustion which rendered us almost impervious to mosquitoes and sand-flies, was something not easily found in England except under conditions

artificially created. The pleasure was enhanced by Edward's willingness to share the load of the journey, to carry a canoe on his head or a sixty-pound rucksack on his back, but at the same time ignore the more fetish aspects of camping lore, he and I sharing a common aversion to anything resembling a Boy Scout. But why, I wonder, did we insist on travelling twenty miles a day when, had we dawdled, we could have caught bass in the clear waters of the lakes, or examined more closely the habits of chipmunks which darted in and out of the rocks at the foot of the pine trees, or varied our exertions by indulging in the unusual beauty of the scene? In a small world where a man was judged by 'ruggedness', powers of endurance and the asphyxiating quality of his pipe which he lit on rising at six in the morning, the idea would have sounded far-fetched. Not having been trained as professional weight-lifters we were pleased to survive in the company of young men who, despite their initial impulse to size us up in terms of poundage and muscular development, were friendly, good natured and easily amused.

Edward had another five years of life in front of him. He died of wounds in Calais which his battalion of the Rifle Brigade was sent to defend at the time of the retreat from Dunkirk. I am sure that his scepticism and his ability to endure served him, and his companions, to the last. He was a quiet man, and so considerate of other people's feelings that I cannot associate him with the violent and destructive circumstances of his death, though I can see that in an epic situation such as war his love of his country and everything English would have led him to discard considerations of personal safety. He was a man who died for what he loved.

Back in Oxford life seemed a little tame. I found consolation in reading, but not often the history books that were necessary for taking my degree. The Canadian trip had left me with a different sense of achievement. It had been hard work keeping up. Comfort appeared to be entirely relative. To sleep soundly on the bare floor of a hut, or on a rock by the side of a lake, was just as easy with a little practice as sleeping in a bed, although I defy anyone,

whose natural habitat is not the desert, to sleep comfortably in sand which, with the slightest movement from the sleeper, has a way of poking him in the stomach, or nudging him in the back. To enjoy quintessentially the pleasures of a well-prepared meal, a hot bath, or a feather mattress it was necessary occasionally to forget what these comforts meant. To succeed at anything, too, a little aggression, even a touch of ruthlessness—although a dangerous weapon to wield—was no bad thing. It was nice to feel like an animal again, to get nearer to the state of primitive man, and to meet with a fresh experience in which I could test my strength.

The expedition to Canada was not my first journey abroad. There had been others, a series of visits to families in France snatched out of the Easter holidays for the purpose of learning French, and one memorable cavalcade into the Balkans, my younger brother and I accompanying our parents, with Rose Harrison and Arthur Bushell maiding and valeting in attendance. Travel was by *Wagon-lits* as far as Bucharest where at the station an equerry met my parents and escorted them to the Royal Palace which was their destination, my brother and I being shunted down the line to Skopje to spend ten days on, or near, the surface of a copper mine owned by a friend of my father's in London. Our host was the manager of the mine, a German who spoke a little English, and for ten days we rode his horses and kicked our heels until the Bucharest visit drew to a close.

From Bucharest we moved in retinue to Budapest, to a hotel this time, more luxurious than a palace, in the middle of this enchanting city which seemed in the spring of the year to be peopled by carefree men and beautiful women, and which displayed in many of its shops and restaurants the handsome features of the Prince of Wales who had recently visited there and captured everyone's imagination. Admiral Horthy was Regent, but the current rumour was that the Prince of Wales had been asked to mount the throne of the new Hungary. After two days sightseeing and an interview which my parents had with Horthy we were escorted into the Opera House for a performance of *Parsifal*,

none of us being opera lovers and my father being, as he confessed, tone deaf. At that age my first introduction to opera was like being shut up interminably in some stifling church, with the service conducted in German, a performance which became so tedious that I had to leave my seat at one point and walk in the street, impatient for this incomprehensible bawling match to reach its conclusion. The last part of the evening was in happy contrast to the first. My parents had been advised to dine, after the opera, at the Arizona which, I later learned, had the reputation of being the best night club in the world and which, it transpired, was the first night club they had ever, and then unsuspectingly, visited. The Arizona certainly lived up to their idea of what a night club must be like. At the back of the room the band, wearing scarlet shirts and grey bowler hats, was stacked in rows, pyramidical in shape, up to the ceiling. Between the tables were round panniers, cushioned like large luxurious dog baskets, in which couples were dragged and then moored half-way up to the roof when they wished to enjoy the privacy of their own company. And the cabaret, which wound in and out of the tables, was danced by twelve young and ravishing girls, all of them quite naked except for a small fig-leaf. The *coup de grace* was given by the mistress of the proprietor, a lady of middle age, also naked, who was propelled in a basket round the room from the ceiling, leaning over the edge and throwing, to the various tables, fruits out of a large cornucopia, the guests for the most part tossing them back with kisses and other gesticulations. Our table received an orange, agilely caught by my father on whose head it would otherwise have landed. He, by this time acutely embarrassed, proceeded to peel it. My parents pronounced the Arizona to be Hell: we thought it was Heaven; and precautions were taken to ensure that we did not become tangled up in a similar kind of venture on our last remaining night.

From Budapest we moved to Vienna, housed by a Hapsburg whose wife was a relation of Queen Marie of Roumania, but who seemed to be very unroyal and more concerned with motor-cars and machinery than with monarchy. By this time, fired and

inspired by the beauties of the Arizona, I could no longer be contained in the Hapsburg house, but found my own way to what I understood to be the nearest Viennese equivalent of what I had left behind, a dark, lack-lustre emporium where a young lady tried valiantly to seduce me, then aged eighteen—a contest in which I felt, given more time and therefore greater opportunity, she might have succeeded but in which, under the circumstances, she was unable to overcome my shyness.

Vienna was not Germany but compared to Budapest it had a Germanic flavour, encroaching on the territory peopled by men of military mind who, from my university, attracted either the more politically minded dons or, reputedly, the older itinerant homosexuals who lived a cosy life of their own. In Vienna, as a relief to sight-seeing, I went to a music hall which was sparked by one act of delightful anti-Fascist levity. A small comedian in baggy trousers harangued the audience and punctuated his talk by raising his right arm in the manner of the Party salute and got as far as 'Heil' but then, lowering his arm to scratch his head, searched for the rest of that diabolic phrase, the name of his saviour not coming immediately to mind. This was a bold gesture which produced a laugh.

This journey, the last of its kind, had a feeling of autumn leaves, despite the time of year. The Palace at Bucharest was heavily guarded against the activities of anarchists, a guard not so immaculate and more apprehensive than the sentries outside Buckingham Palace. Budapest was enjoying an Indian summer, basking in a formal beauty offset by an easy conjunction of the Orient and the West, less stylized than Vienna which was uncomfortably conscious of the Nazi Party, a veritable ogre which already exercised a hypnotic effect on those too timid to challenge its authority. The Balkan journey, with its scenes of palaces and its undertone of politics, had given me a feeling for history which was unsupported by much knowledge.

At Oxford I digested a fairly wide sample of the English nineteenth-century novel, and the works of Tolstoy and Balzac as well as some of the contemporaries, Maugham, Sinclair Lewis,

Hemingway and, repeatedly, Damon Runyon. The field of reading was inviting and open to further discovery, but of European history, except by inference, I had learned little more than I knew at Eton. At the end of my second year it seemed unlikely that I could learn two thousand years of history in approximately three hundred days and so, in order to gain a degree, I switched to reading Agriculture and Political Economy, agriculture not being considered in those days a sufficiently comprehensive subject to be allowed to stand on its own. Most of my colleagues who had expressed an interest in farming had done so in order to qualify for the privilege of keeping a car in their first year.

The compression of a subject—even this one—into a period of nine months, about a quarter of the time normally allowed for its gestation in the mind of the student, gave to life an urgent and happier lease. It was not too difficult to acquire a sufficient knowledge of political economy to satisfy the examiners, or, perhaps more precisely, to fool them. Like a theological student keeping up with current idolatry, the more I learned of economic theory the more keenly I felt that much of it was qualified nonsense. Nagging at each theory was what the economists described as the human element, the tiresome factor that could not be ignored but which could only be imperfectly predicted. And yet economics, except as an abstract theory or a mathematical conundrum, dealt essentially with 'the human element'. And no sooner had one theory been invented and found wanting than another was discovered to qualify it, and a chain link reaction set in. The process as a study was fascinating, but the proceeds often disappointing. After Oxford I was never surprised to learn that an economist, widely respected in his field, might also have the side reputation of being usually wrong in the conclusions which he drew once he applied his knowledge to practical living problems. Had I gone several stages further, and understood more of the mind of Maynard Keynes, I would, I suspect, have found a solid basis for revising my somewhat sweeping opinions. Economic theory was, in one sense, delightful. Like an opiate it offered its student a momentary illusion of power, of discovering

some secret combination that could unlock a door and allow him to see the next and inevitable step in human behaviour. It attracted the attention of many who had a natural appetite for theory which they swallowed like a pill, in the belief that it would do them good; and some of them later made use of it in much the same way that a short-sighted carpenter might pick up a chisel with which to drive a screw into a piece of wood.

The kind of English society which I had discovered, and most enjoyed, and which thrived only in sample quantities, was above all else tolerant. It understood, as I believe few societies have understood, the art of living which scrupulously avoids interfering in other people's affairs. It might register an antipathy, but never an intolerance, of other people's personal habits. It had a conception of morality, it disliked amorality, but it seldom dealt in moral judgements. It enjoyed serious things and absurdities, and appreciated that there were certain matters serious enough in themselves never to be treated earnestly. This was the real aristocracy, the aristocracy of man irrespective of title: selective, enlightened and unconcerned with the popularity of its appeal.

Most of my life as an undergraduate was essentially social, whether it was at Oxford, in London, or elsewhere. In searching for love in the company of women I was, much of the time—although I scarcely knew it—searching to find part of my own identity, as well as to escape from the ethics of an all-male society which has its own peculiar method of proclaiming a man a good fellow. We, the English, as a nation seem very given to this. Our clubs and many of our societies recognize an order in which women play no part. That is their purpose and they offer us a welcome retreat. But the effect of predominantly male societies on young men, who have been taught to respect this order from the age of eight to twenty at schools and universities, sometimes leads them into the error of regarding women as subsidiary kinds of men, open to the same blandishments, recognizing the same standards, and listening to the same appeals to reason. In the United States the young men with whom I associated before the

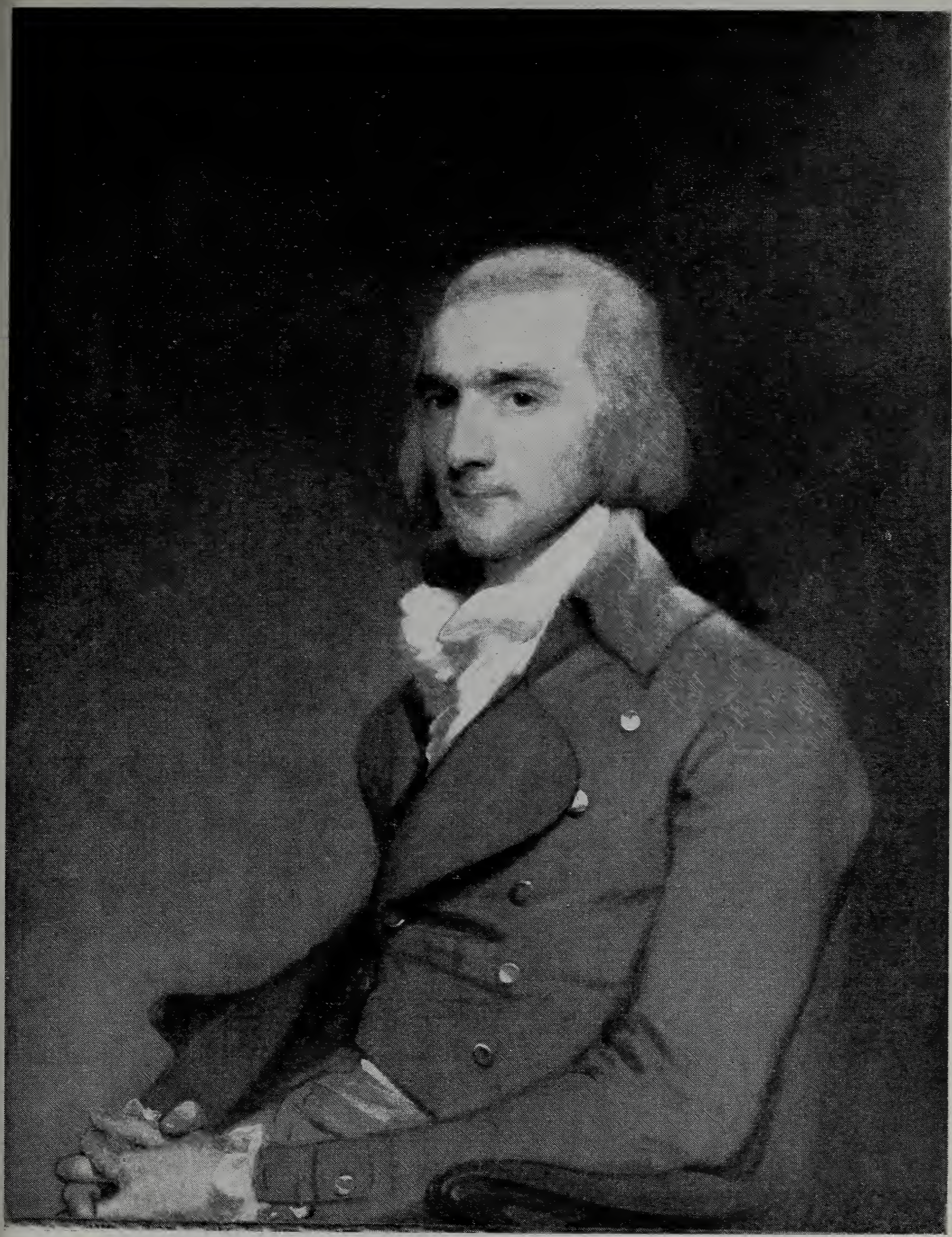
war seemed to fall into the other kind of trap, of moulding their characters so as to conform to the kind of ideal that their women expected of them, creating thereby a world in which women had the upper hand, a position which their women were quick to seize on but one which they could never properly relish.

I met Gemla unexpectedly when she was leaving the rooms of a friend. She was saying good night, over her shoulder, and she did it with such a purring, happy expression, so politely, and yet at the same time conveying such a sense of detachment that my attention was riveted. She spoke with a slightly foreign accent, and looked attractive and self-possessed and I knew I *had* to meet her again. I telephoned her lodgings next morning and asked her to come and have some coffee with me, and she appeared surprised by this invitation from a total stranger, but nevertheless accepted. How innocent of her, how romantic, how sympathetically quick she was to react. After lunch in the George Hotel we arranged to meet again. She had to get back to London, she could not stay. What predatory creatures, I wondered, lay in wait for her the moment her train pulled in at Paddington. How could anyone as gay and innocent be allowed to live alone in lodgings. I visited her in London in the week, and she visited Oxford at the weekends, and soon we were meeting as often as we could. In the warm summer nights we went down to the river and slept in the grass. In the afternoons, avoiding her landlady, we enjoyed the seclusion of a bed. I felt like a young lion. She was blonde and attractive and a few years older than me, and she made me believe I was grown-up. She came from Bavaria and made a little money in London as a mannequin, and she was nicely dressed. Her hair was dyed a flaxen yellow, her eyebrows were pencilled thin. She would have looked better without these subterfuges from nature; but they did not make me like her any the less. I imagined I would always love her in a light-hearted way, and no suggestion of marriage ever clouded our thoughts. One weekend from Oxford I asked her to stay at Cliveden. She arrived looking her best and at dinner appeared startlingly attractive, a

seductive blonde dressed in a little black velvet. On Sunday morning she was impounded and taken to the Christian Science Church, a young lady evidently in need of redemption. She counter-attacked that afternoon by presenting my father with a garland of wild flowers, choosing a moment when my mother was not in the room. He seemed genuinely delighted by this attention. Perhaps he needed it even more than I did.

When I went to Canada to travel in its woods a second time, life seemed empty without her, and I wrote her telling her how I longed to see her again. Once I was out of sight a friend picked her up and took her away—without a sign of struggle. He did everything with a leisurely sense of style; and he did the same thing to me several years later, and I came to wonder whether it would become a habit. Gemla was ready to be unfaithful and when I returned, I discovered, so was I. It was rumoured in Oxford that she was a spy, but I cannot think that what she learned would have been useful in that profession; although she must have learned that she had a lot of appeal and that men everywhere in certain respects are alike.

Nine years later I met her again; fortuitously and briefly in Paris shortly after the war which, thanks to her appeal, she had successfully and at every stage survived, in the sense that she wanted to survive. At the time that Paris was liberated she was a protégée of a gauleiter, one of her countrymen whose position of authority allowed him to live, hated and despised, in a state of comparative luxury in German-occupied France. When he was arrested she, too, was put in jail by the French. But her ability to charm men, and her way of appearing utterly innocent in the face of disaster, accounted for her quick release. She was sitting alone at the bar of the Ritz. Paris was still rather dowdy but she looked chic, dressed in a coat and skirt of vivid strawberry pink with a saucy pink hat trimmed with fur tilted over the front of her head. She had survived her country's crushing defeat and, she told me, had already become engaged to an American soldier who owned a business in Detroit. I remembered how marvellous I had thought her, and how she had always been totally devoid of humour, and the smell



John Jacob Astor (1763–1848) by Gilbert Stuart

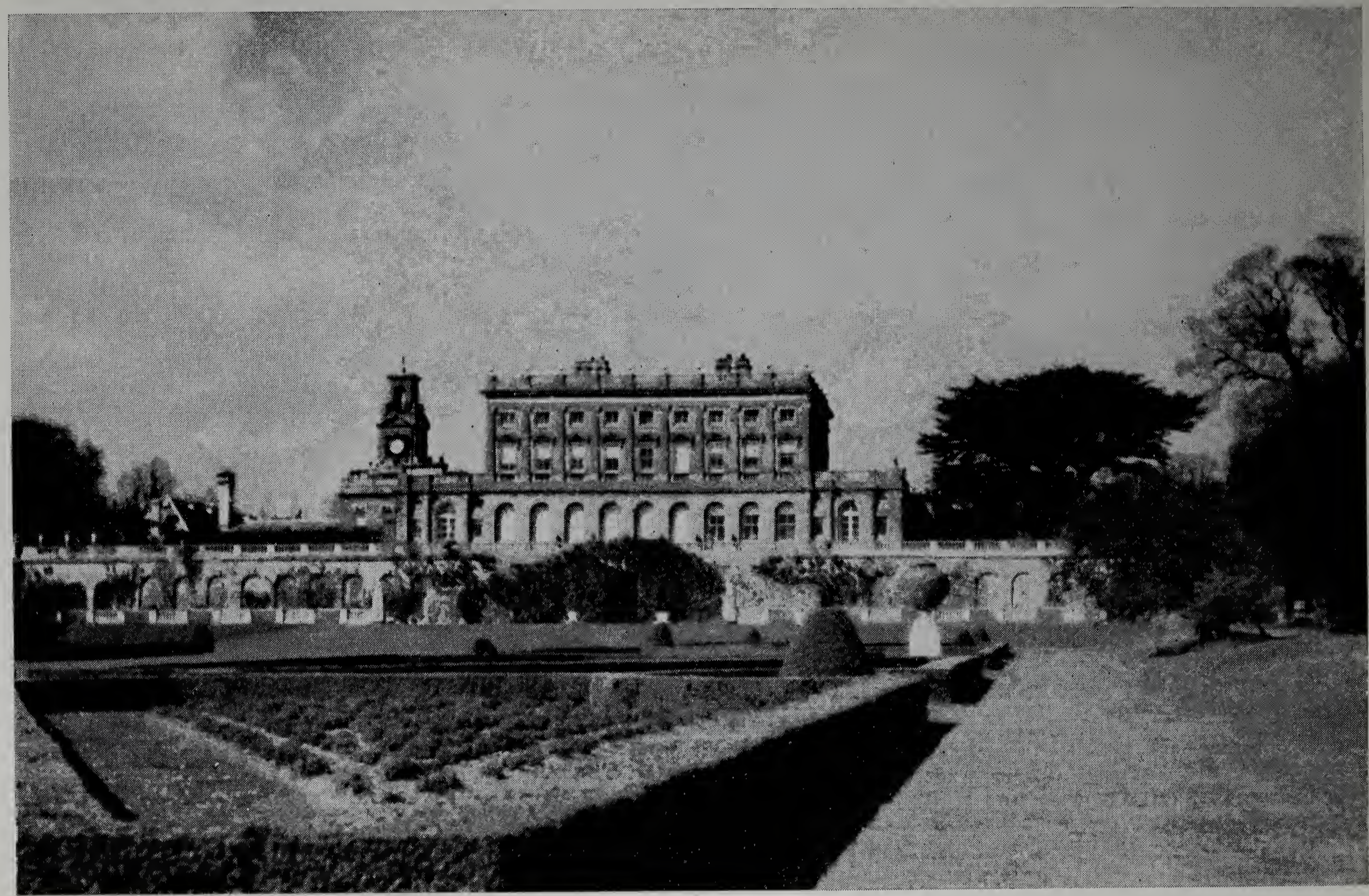
Chiswell Dabney Langhorne (1843–1919)
and Phyllis

William Waldorf Astor (1848–1919)

Nancy and her mother

Nancy and Bobbie

Nancy Astor with Wiss, David (in sailor suit) and self



Cliveden

Cliveden family group

David Nannie Gibbons Wiss Bill

Self My Mother Jakie My Father

The first two women Members of Parliament,
Mrs Wintringham and Nancy Astor

Waldorf Astor (1879–1952) and Philip Lothian

of her scent, and how she used to love to dance. I searched again for the feelings that went with these memories. I remembered the soft touch of her body, and the nice things she said, and how she used to like drinking hot *gluwine*, and how annoyed I became when she used to look at other men. We ordered two drinks and we talked about nothing in particular. She started to tell me about her man from Detroit. She never inquired about any of her friends from Oxford, some of whom had been killed. I tried to give her a little news of them because she had made many friends in Oxford, but she appeared no more interested in them than I was in the man from Detroit. I wondered what I had loved. I began to feel uneasy and embarrassed. She looked just the same, just as pretty; but it was like meeting a total stranger. She was like a cork that would always float in any sea. There was something attractive in this; attractive but disconcerting. I began to feel curiously pompous. I could only see her now as a German tart, and in my mind her nationality told against her more than her profession. This was distressing and I found myself being formally polite, and with a sense of relief I took my leave.

Before I had finished with Oxford my encounters with my parents were becoming strained. In my lodgings in Beaumont Street letters arrived from my mother most weeks, containing not news but appeals to me to read the Bible and to revert to the habit of prayer. At home she demanded my attention and my affection to the point of insistence. When I returned there in the holidays I found myself jerked back to deal with a situation which was to develop into a trial of inner strength. I had to combat a strong streak of possessiveness which ran through the Langhorne family. Its manifestations, I had to remind myself, were symptoms of affection. Loose-living and more worldly women would not have felt the same urge to nurture their children. Within the wider family circle two of my cousins, my mother's nephews, had recently left England in order to escape from their mother's grip. Their lives were becoming distraught, and they both eventually met a tragic end. Whenever the matter of their defection was referred to at home, their behaviour was attributed to some weakness

inherited from their father. The Langhornes had personalities that were geared in a way that did not allow them to see themselves as being at fault. Their good looks and lively charm allowed them to do this with dexterity; and their generous natures showed such warm intentions that their most impulsive actions were usually forgiven. However a situation was developing that had to be faced. My mother's urge to control the minds of her children made her wish to get too close; and made me want to back away. Either I would have a prolonged tussle on my hands, or else I would have to change my ground.

My study of Greek mythology and history taught me that the young Spartans, whose measures seemed extreme, threw their mothers over cliffs. Perseus, showing a greater insight and more restraint in combating the Gorgon, knowing that he would be lost if he looked her in the eye, mirrored her reflection in a shield. The hero, defeating that aspect of woman that could have defeated him, adopted tactics that were oblique. Perhaps there were times—and perhaps this was one of them—when, faced with a woman of my mother's formidable qualities, it was not cowardly but merely expedient to retreat, to secure a victory tactically rather than become embroiled in an argument conducted purely on the level of emotion. In an emotional argument with women men always stood at a disadvantage. I remembered the example of Keats's knight-at-arms, who had been taken for a ride in no uncertain way. 'La belle Dame sans Merci hath thee in thrall!' I knew the words by heart in which the poet, who loved women as men should love, also saw the dangers of meeting them on the wrong terms. I was beginning to detect in women of all ages, from the youngest to the oldest, qualities which I was anxious to meet, by which I could be happily seduced: I was also encountering qualities which, if allowed to run riot, would bring about my destruction. Defeat was unthinkable: a battle of the sexes seemed almost unpardonable: I therefore had to find room to manœuvre.

My father, from an elevated pedestal that I could not reach, continued to offer cautionary advice. He noted that I was be-

coming unpunctual and sloppy. He would prefer it if I did not drink. Smoking, too, was a bad habit: it really showed a lack of self-control. He did not like to see me reading the glossy magazines: my spare time would be better occupied with a good and improving book. Had I yet made up my mind what I wanted to do? He cited the example of some of his contemporaries at Oxford who had wasted their lives, and one unfortunate in particular who had landed up in prison. My language, of late, he found distasteful. The words 'bloody' and 'damn' were offensive. He personally never used any word stronger than 'drat' (which I seemed to remember was a corruption of 'God rot'). Stern, benevolent, judicial in his view, he reigned, for the time being, like Jehovah, a figure to fear, respect and increasingly to resent. I was of an age when we should have been able to sit down together like men without him stressing the point of age. Instead, driven too far by the man I needed as a friend, I volleyed my words with his, telling him I disagreed with most of his opinions. Being contradicted by one of his sons amounted to insubordination: being challenged on a whole series of issues at the same moment amounted to something worse. On one painful occasion we lost our tempers and he, believing that he must either assert his authority summarily or lose it altogether, ordered me to my room to wait there until he judged I had recovered my equilibrium; an order hazardous to challenge but one with which, at the age of twenty, it was impossible to comply. For a while I felt, bitterly, that instead of listening he had closed his mind. Unable to recognize the individual characteristics of his sons, or offer a word of encouragement he, uncomprehending, had implied that if I did not mend my ways I would come to a sticky end. I would, I felt convinced, be better living as a renegade rather than emulating the stern pattern of his thought.

My father's attitude was puzzling. I was never quite convinced that he meant everything that he said in an admonitory way. Where any of his children appeared too eager to fall in with his pattern, in a manner that was obviously intended to please him, he appeared a little bored. He despised obsequiousness, although

his manner sometimes appeared to imply that he demanded it. What I was not able to say to him was that I wished to heavens he would not be so unselfish, and that *he* would try kicking over the traces and find some way of having a good time.

8

Tribal Feeling

'Imprisoned in every fat man is a thin one, wildly signalling to be let out.' It was Cyril Connolly who wrote this, and the sentence can be paraphrased in many ways and applied to many personal dilemmas. Concealed behind the conventional exterior, the tweeds, the well-fitting flannels and the I-Zingari tie, there lived inside me a rebel, questioning and examining everything he had been told and taught. The tide that finally carried him away obeyed no prescriptive plan. It was the tide of instinct: primordial, unpredictable, the universal tide which could only operate once the barriers of will-power and regulations ceased to hold their meaning: a tide picked up in unexpected places, assisted by the hands of friendship, and guided by an element of faith. I remained fortified by a belief that what I had recognized with clarity as a child, before I could comprehend the garbled intellectual reasoning of grown-ups, had a meaning which could be translated into the pattern of adult behaviour.

The world of Cliveden which I loved as a child was a place of lyrical beauty in which, living in a world concealed from my parents, I had enjoyed a free and adventurous life. In this world of order in which everyone seemed to know their place I detected the classical pattern of life within which I, more romantically bound, could live. It was my true starting point, the recognition of classical form and romantic upsurge, those two indispensable approaches to living, always at variance with each other, which I later lost sight of but which, in the context of manhood, I had to re-find. The world of Cliveden that I was coming increasingly to dislike, which existed behind the brilliant social façade, was the world of moral abjuration, the autocracy of the mind operating through the sensitive medium of the conscience, the authority

which both my parents took to be the proper function of parenthood. This was the world in which our and everyone else's actions were judged on a moral basis, a world of denial and restraint which allowed little room for experiment or the more communicable acts of self-expression. It was a world containing many factions, of parents and brothers with widely disparate tastes and views, united uneasily by the voice of parental authority: a world I found increasingly stultifying: a world from which I was determined to escape.

When I had finished with Oxford, at the age of twenty-one—the mystical age, proscribed by law and reinforced by parental decree, at which I became, officially, responsible for my actions—I left Cliveden, never to live there again. There were occasional weekends, and special visits when the family came together, separated and united, anxious and reassured, effervescent reminders of the gaiety we had known. And there were solitary days, with time borrowed from the past, when the house was deserted, haunted, and inviting, and I revisited my childhood home and tried to recapture the memory of earliest loves.

The role of rebel, however, was complicated by the pattern of life within the family circle. At Cliveden my brother Bill, partly because of the difference in our temperaments, remained a stranger. His legitimate role as eldest of the family, a role which he could outline in his own mind, was not one which I, viewing matters more empirically, was prepared to recognize. Separated by his view of himself as the heir-apparent, he stayed in my thoughts like a kind of mandarin, a cultivated official from another hemisphere who comprehended the mysteries of family institutions, of ritual and rite. The illusion was perhaps assisted by Bill's knowledge and affinity with the East where he had travelled extensively after leaving Oxford. His deductive intelligence, his kindness and his reasonable wish to assume responsibility, qualities and ambitions which I respect, remained unhappily for both of us concealed from my vision which at that time demanded from my friends a vivid, bold and innate expression of feeling. We were like two mariners cast off in an open

boat, sharing little common language, making friendly faces in each other's direction, and each pulling in different ways. It was difficult being the eldest son. I did not, I regret, make the task easier.

David, guided by some inner light, for a while revolted against the politics, the prescriptions, and the social edifice which made up the backcloth of our life at home. For a time he turned abruptly against his own class in society, the class in which I numbered and valued my friends. Despite my feelings of affection and many points of recognition, I resented his experiments at living which seemed to disregard the fragile structure of our society, the subtle class differentials, the barriers through which we passed and re-passed by touch and by feeling, whose contact could become distorted if subjected to a heavy or analytical treatment. His measures appeared too literal rather than too extreme. I lost touch with his humour, which was of a particularly subtle and artistic sort, and perhaps for a while so did he. In failing to comprehend I showed the inexperience and callowness of my youth. His life, which led down channels I could not pursue, which was impelled by his feeling for humanity, became the target for an attack by my mother who pleaded that David did not appreciate the sacrificial quality of parental love. The converse, of course, was true. He was discovering about the sacrificial quality of parental love. We both were; and neither of us was anxious to offer ourselves up as the sacrifice. We also were like two mariners cast off in our open boat: two mariners with a considerable command of a common language, each anxious to chart the course but each holding divergent views as to our compass bearings. His considered advice, offered as an unsolicited gift, a free sample of his particular concept of wisdom, prompted me to invent outrageous replies.

Jakie and I had been brought up virtually as twins: we shared our thoughts, our loves, and our laughter; but we had come to a junction in the road. I had to go one way, and he did not choose to follow. He felt, too, that I was losing my sense of humour. And he was right. He preferred to see me as the happy-go-lucky

person he had known, who would chance anything, or turn any situation into a preposterous joke always within a certain classical context of behaviour. Jakie, like my mother, was effervescent. His humour recognized the classic form but insisted on viewing it from outside, like a child peering over a garden fence watching the stilted movements of grown-up people and finding them fascinating but absurd. We remained tied, inexorably, by the bonds of trust; but our points of recognition, once so strong, became dimmed. Stoically, but I believe at some slight cost to himself, he attempted to accept our parents in the light in which they presented themselves. Their over-lifesize reflections, too good, too emphatic, lacking the essential gradations of tone, I could only reject. We were both still young men impregnated with ideals. My journey had to be conducted alone, irrespective of the opinions of my family.

My sister Wiss I always loved, but then she was older than me and for that reason our paths did not often meet. Bobbie, although only my half-brother (he always insisted that he was a foster-brother, making a parody of his relationship, as he did of much else), was an integral part of our life. In some respects his position in family matters was pivotal. Bobbie was the only one of us who uninhibitedly spoke to my father like another human being; and my father, and all of us, were greatly indebted to him for this. He was friendly, good-looking, and, above all else, he had the human touch. If the word 'charm' has any precise meaning then Bobbie had more of it than anyone I knew. As a young man and a subaltern in the Household Cavalry he had been an accomplished amateur jockey. In those days jockeys wore soft caps without any hard protection to their heads, and in a steeplechase Bobbie had fallen and broken his skull. After this he was the first jockey to wear a crash helmet inside his cap, a practice which was subsequently made compulsory. Later he won the Grand Military Steeplechase but the following year, at the second attempt, he had a bad fall, breaking his skull a second time. This ended his steeplechasing career. Later his life assumed a tragic complexity, a life often near despair. His humanity and courage

contributed much to mine, and I shall always be in his debt. As a young man his wit was brilliant and devastating—sometimes perhaps too devastating—but his humour revealed a touch of pathos and a love and respect for the point of truth. He showed me, quite unconsciously, that sometimes, with somebody who is sensitive, where the course of his life becomes blocked, the rest of his life becomes nothing more than a parody of his true self. From that moment on his fate is to be judged on his outward performance, and almost invariably harshly; but his real quality, however submerged, remains intact. His integrity and courage I came to respect, and he was generous in everything he did.

Leaving home, a proper and almost inevitable process, was taken as an act of defiance. The Langhorne family in England had a strong tribal sense. Their security, they believed, depended on remaining closely knit, in much the same way as families in North America during the time of the early settlers had attached a great importance to keeping in touch with their kin. The idea of a member of the family wishing to live outside its circle struck them as in some way dangerous. It threatened the hegemony of the tribe. The Astors, being indigenously Northern and cosmopolitan, did not share these anxieties. My mother, quoting her Langhorne nieces who, with the exception of her niece Nancy, invariably quoted her, emphasized that it was wicked for me to leave home. Disregarding the law of genetics she suggested I was a Langhorne through and through, that I had not one vestige of Astor blood. My father was spared these more outrageous remarks. The Langhornes in England, so it seemed, with their nostalgic feelings for Mirador and all that it had come to mean in their lives, were still playing at Southerners and Yankees, and at Cowboys and Indians.

In my new-found lodging, a penthouse overlooking the roofs of Grosvenor Square, the rhythm of a London life, with its many different notes, was at first interrupted by the arrival of delegates, a secretary, a relation, a godfather, a Christian Scientist, all instructed to restore the lost sheep. These were followed by impromptu visits from my mother who attempted to persuade me

that my exodus showed a base ingratitude, a flouting of authority which, in anyone decently brought up, should induce a sense of shame. I was corrupted by money: my behaviour was unworthy of myself. She impressed on me that I could not escape, that I would rue the day when I had denied God and turned my back on my religion. I could not argue. I was too distressed. This was the final uprooting, the parting of the ways. Her life, surrounded by members of the family, offered her much with which to console herself; and I, at last, had room to manœuvre. I remembered that most of the family's attempts at self-expression, when they deviated from my mother's views, were interpreted either as a form of heresy or as a form of showing off; and expressions of inquiry into the social behaviour of people in the wider world were measured according to rigid principles of good and bad behaviour. My father, who did not share this desire to keep his children at home, remained aloof. He had always supported his wife and his silence indicated that he was not ready to make an exception now. I blessed the name of my grandfather who, by his will, had granted me, at the age of twenty-one, a measure of financial independence. I looked back at him and saw him afresh, as a man of uncommon sagacity and foresight.

Although I have never enjoyed living in a big city for any length of time I had a certain nostalgic feeling for London. It had, for me, a murky cosmopolitan charm, a Dickensian flavour of small alleys and large and important thoroughfares, of street vendors and street musicians and vast impersonal buildings, of Covent Garden, its market and its opera house, and the music hall flavour of the London Palladium. The Chelsea reaches of the Thames in winter had a particular misty beauty, brought to life by tug boats and their trailing barges. London was, for me, a city of astonishing contrasts, of grandeur and squalor, of grimness and humour. It could, sometimes, wrap itself round me like a cloak, making me feel both warm and invisible; and at other times leave me with the feeling that I was the only person in the world without a friend. I took to exploring it mostly at night. This was both exciting and perplexing. The streets, and many of the small jazz

clubs which I frequented, were littered with prostitutes, a new phenomenon in my experience. The street walkers, in their tight skirts, their fox furs, with their poodle dogs on leashes appeared, after dark, like an unrehearsed *corps de ballet* whose members might have sprung out of the manholes in the pavement, lending to the Regency and Victorian architecture of the West End a certain contemporary raffish flavour. To whom, I wondered, did these ladies present such an insatiable sexual challenge? Not, at any rate, to a romantically inclined young man who was willing to meet with a love affair. As decoration they added a brash note of colour to the panoramic effect of the city at night, deserted by traffic, illuminated dramatically by street lamps which threw their dark, contrasting shadows. As human beings they were objects of pity. As business ladies they were, I assumed, the erratic partners of middle-aged married men who had never established a happy relationship with their wives or, presumably, with any other women. I shared, in my imagination, a little of the fantasy of Mr Gladstone, the venerable Prime Minister who, in old age and not as a matter of habit, used to consort quite innocently (I believe) with ladies of the streets, fostering the notion that he could, in his wisdom, put them on the road of redemption. Pity, and a charitable impulse, were preferable as a state of mind to an attitude of scorn: but these attitudes seemed insufficient in themselves to discover in any waif who was willing to sell her body another Mary Magdalen.

Although I enjoyed the solitary pleasure of imbibing the atmosphere of a city, and learnt that I could enjoy life through my visual and aesthetic sense more readily than I could intellectually, I felt, for the first time, separated from other people, unable properly to share a casual acquaintance, my life pitched in over-dramatic terms. My roots were still family roots, and as they became severed I came to live uneasily outside of the stream of life, belonging to no world, confused and conscious of a sense of guilt. Some of the harshness and false pride, the Puritanism which encourages men to apply a moral judgement to everyday situations, clung to me like mud. It could only be washed away

slowly, a little at a time. I had assumed, when I was at the university, that I was a man because I copied the habits of grown-up men. I was slowly coming to the painful conclusion that I was still in many respects a child, that my notions about people were immature to the point of childishness. I was still abiding by the very precepts I was so earnestly attempting to revoke, the precepts which indicated that everything was either good or bad, black or white, acceptable as an aspect of God's 'perfection' or to be rejected for its element of impurity. This road appeared to lead downhill in the direction of insanity, towards a solitary, incommunicable view of 'goodness' which had no meaning in the context of human behaviour. In childhood I had been encouraged to believe, as part of my religious instruction, that in some indefinable way I was perfect, that concealed inside me was a perfect being. This notion, I was coming to see, contained the germ of self-love, the natural concomitant of early childhood self-awareness, the most debilitating condition which a man of years could suffer. Gradually, erratically, sometimes near to a feeling of despair, I came to refute, finally and for all time, the notion that I, or any other creature, was a symbol of perfection. The gods and devils, the heroes and villains of my childhood fantasies became not so much ideals or their opposites, expressing standards of absolute behaviour, as archetypal symbols of the good and the evil, the constructive and the destructive elements that were part of me and part of every man. Worried and puzzled, I was slowly beginning to exorcise the voices that had re-echoed in my mind, the harsh peremptory judgements handed to me in my youth, which castigated both me and other human beings for their weaknesses, ridiculing people from a lofty pinnacle of assumed, impeccable behaviour. The pinnacle seemed, on closer examination, to be like a reversed pyramid, without roots or solid foundation. There appeared in my consciousness a small flickering light, a light which could never be completely extinguished. In a richer and more mysterious world, the world of humanity and feeling and perception, I was becoming dimly aware of my emergent identity.

Outwardly I assumed the marks of brashness and bravura, a

devil-may-care attitude, heedless of other people's opinions, ready to drink anyone under the table or seduce any man's wife. Inwardly it was a very different story. Privately I was having the struggle of my life: the struggle which some people face, and others, to their cost, manage to evade: the struggle to do better than reflect, at second hand, the beliefs and mannerisms of other people: the struggle to grow up.

There is nothing quite so serious as a young man in the throes of a religious or an anti-religious experience. He is neither child nor man, yet he carries the cares of the world on his shoulders. He will never, whatever happens to him later, feel weighed down in quite the same way again. My example, I think, was typical, although my agony may have been a little prolonged. Feverishly I tried to determine a pattern of order to make sense out of the seemingly pointless behaviour of society. Might this be done by an elaborate process of stratifying people and ideas? Politically these notions led in the direction of statism, towards the utterly planned society in which the views of individuals could scarcely be heard above the calls of propaganda and abjuration. The idea was appalling. Better a hair shirt, a beard and sandals; or live in the hedges like a gypsy, out of reach of the law. My thoughts jumped to caricature. Why not reduce life to abbreviated terms: people one recognized and liked, dubbing the rest merely four-letter men? The metaphor was harmless: it did not particularize on people's defects. The trouble was it had so little meaning. Groups of people, so it seemed, seeking to establish their identities, artists, writers, religionists, socialites, politicians, aristocrats, intellectuals, appeared to be attempting to compress the human race into a number of boxes, each carrying a different label. I came to see men as being both separated and threaded together. The boxes had no walls outside of the imagination. The pendulum of my emotions, lurching the other way, pointed to the unrestrained life of feeling, of aesthetic and erotic experience, defying any classical sense of order, a world of romantic chaos. This revealed a picture of society reduced to the state of hysterical and despondent monkeys, occasionally pausing to imitate the gestures of

civilized men. I turned once more to reading, this time to a study of comparative religion. Sometimes I visited a Catholic church, and tried to share a feeling of awe and humility with the people who had come in off the street to pray. Apart from a fleeting love affair I found no sanctuary.

It was a salutary experience to feel lost and utterly alone, to capture some sense of the dilemma of destitute people who continue to live without complaint, even though the worldly context of their lives offers them few prospects other than bare survival. Accepted ideas of success assumed a different, an entirely relative value. Self-conceit, the insignia of early triumphs, became subjected to a severe scrutiny. From such a journey the traveller returns, inch by inch, to safer and more familiar ground. He will never see life in quite the same terms as he did formerly. His serious judgements of people will be less pessimistic, less harsh and less hasty because, in his confusion, he has also experienced the condition of despair, and in emerging from it has recognized its ephemeral quality.

At an office in London I was, supposedly, trying to learn accountancy, the elementary mathematics of finance. These studies left no deep impression. The world of monetary exchange revealed neither its charms nor its secrets. My life inwardly was becoming a little more settled, and I decided to travel, to visit America and the wilder parts of Mexico, and find a desert where I could be on my own and see new cities and new societies and do this before the inevitable war started.

Before leaving I went to Oxford to say goodbye to Jakie, and learned that he had reluctantly become involved in a family dispute. In any heated controversy he had the talent of a Charlie Chaplin for producing the unexpected blow, the one that was never intended to hurt but which farcically turned his assailant's flank. He loved horses, and had ambitions as an amateur steeplechase jockey; but my father, displeased by reports of his work, had confiscated his horse. The return of the horse, which meant so much to Jakie, hung by a solitary thread. He would see it again, but only if he passed his exams. What, I asked him, were his pros-

pects? He said they were not very bright, and thought it unlikely that he would satisfy his examiners. How could he best break it to father? 'I may have to come clean,' he suggested, 'and tell father the only thing I've passed this term is water, and not much of that.'

My journey to America, though more rambling and not as eventful as that of Juan, the hero of Eric Linklater's creating, had one factor in common with his. Plans, no sooner formulated, for travelling to remote places became unsettled, and finally unstuck, due to a chance encounter with a girl. Santa Barbara, in California, became my journey's end. I met Amanda across a room, separated by a sea of strangers, a gentle-eyed girl with a brown complexion and brown hair, wearing a short and becoming white dress. Almost from the first we moved in step. Thrilled by her whole appearance, the changing tones of her voice, her quiet adventurous laugh, after meeting her I could think of nothing else. She had just finished acting a small part in a play that had been running in New York, and like me she was at a loose end. We were both of an age to adventure, to find intense pleasure in everyday events. We knew life in half-idyllic terms, and it allowed us a little over-spill of generous feeling, bread to cast on the waters, our particular happiness seeming not exclusively our own possession so much as a heritage that had to be shared. The ugly and vulgar seemed no longer alarming, but merely tragic and absurd. We met in Elysium, and our encounter was all too brief, and we were separated only by the rattle of war-drums. From the distance of California Chamberlain's visit to Munich looked like the advent of war. I decided to leave and join the army; otherwise I feared I might give way to my feelings and never return to face the music. We had agreed never to say goodbye.

Back in London, in the summer of 1939, life carried on outwardly much according to its familiar pattern. People hurried to

their offices, and on their way home from their offices they bought the evening papers and turned to the sports page to see what had won the latest race. The county cricket championship pursued its relentless course. Mothers hustled their daughters, dressed in white satin and plumes, to be presented at Court while there was still time. People dressed up and paraded and danced and smiled: but everybody waited for the war, for a worse version of the last war to be fought all over again. 'Peace in our time', 'No war this year', these were some of the banner headlines. The newspapers which bartered optimism for actuality might just as effectively have declared that the world was coming to an end.

The world of pre-war England *was* about to come to an end. Like my childhood, like many of the ideas I had been brought up with, it had to die in order to give way to something else. Cliveden, in a social sense, despite its overtone of politics and its curious undertone of religious beliefs, symbolized something that was already dead, the grand approach to living in the patrician style that had only survived symbolically after 1918. The conventional graces of English social life, which were still rigidly observed, emphasized the harshness and the finality of the blow that was about to fall.

I joined my local yeomanry and in August we went to camp. We were still volunteers and military discipline did not have quite the force of reality that it was later to assume. For a fortnight we were under canvas, and for a fortnight it rained. We picked our way to the mess tent in the evenings, through squelching mud, dressed immaculately in blue patrols, with epaulettes of chain mail. We carried swords and wore blue and scarlet fore-and-aft caps. We dressed like officers and gentlemen of the time of the Crimean war. After dinner the large marquee became raucous with shouting, middle-aged officers jumping on to tables, singing bawdy and unfunny songs. This forced conviviality was the worst part. Did the other ranks, I wondered, carry on like this? Did their gaiety come more naturally, or did they suffer in silence?

Officer's gun drill in the morning was another thing. Here I, for a change, could turn everything upside down and make

people laugh, except the adjutant, a regular artillery officer who became easily upset. The guns were old 18-pounders and 4·5 howitzers from the last war; but the postures of gun drill were Crimean. Kneeling on one knee, arms to the side, fists clenched, thumbs pointed to the ground, bodies erect, heads back, eyes to the front. It needed only one man to be facing the wrong way and the whole tableau looked ludicrous. Moving the gun, everyone hustling, shoulders to the wheel. 'What is that man doing sitting on the barrel? Does he think he's on a horse? He's under arrest.'

Saturday afternoon most of the officers went away for the weekend and the camp was practically deserted. My arrest took the form of being lines orderly, an office I assumed the Adjutant had invented for the occasion. No one seemed to know what a lines orderly did; but the general consensus of opinion was that a lines orderly officer ought to stroll, in dignified fashion, up and down the empty rows of tents. Could anything be sillier than that! I went to the mess tent and ordered a large glass of brandy from an aged waiter, one of the band of waiters dressed in black tail-coats who had been hired from a catering firm to act as mess orderlies. The thought of drinking alone in this empty marquee was depressing. I asked the old waiter if he wanted a drink and told him to get a bottle of champagne and another glass of brandy. The thought of drinking alone with the old waiter was equally depressing and I left him alone with the champagne.

In the lines of tents a few of the men were exercising the soldier's ancient prerogative of taking an afternoon nap; others were chatting, and the last thing they wanted was an officer eavesdropping their conversation. I picked up a shooting stick from my tent and stationed myself out of earshot of them. Four more hours of doing absolutely nothing. It seemed like being back at school again, at a private school run by lunatics. Anyone, it seemed, who had volunteered for this sort of thing needed his head examining.

Life in territorial army camp seemed bleak, pointless and without humour. I would get in touch with the outside world, the

world in which people were free to think and say what they wanted, where friends would immediately sympathize with my situation and share a little of my smouldering feeling of righteous indignation. I went to the orderly room tent to use the telephone. I had been looking forward to spending this weekend with June Capel and her family. If June had not exactly made me forget that I loved Amanda, the prospect of meeting June from time to time made separation from Amanda easier. Her stepfather answered.

'This outfit, Burghie, is the limit. I don't suppose you'll believe this but they've put me under arrest and I can't get over to see you.'

'I can very well believe it.' Burghie's manner was always breezy. I could imagine him in the homely atmosphere of Lyegrove, fortifying his view of life with a glass of port. He had been in the navy and would appreciate how bloody stupid the army could be. 'If I was your colonel,' continued Burghie, obviously turning the matter over carefully in his mind, 'I'd probably tether you out with the regimental goat.' To such frivolity I could only think of answering that the colonel *was* the regimental goat. June, with her quick intelligence, would be sympathetic. I asked Burghie if I could speak to her.

'Hullo, Mike'—her voice had a staccato musical ring. 'What's all this about you being tethered out with your regimental goat? It sounds rather fun. I expect you prefer it to being cooped up with all those people.'

'June, we haven't got a regimental goat . . .'

'Bad luck, Mike. Perhaps I can find you one.'

'I just rang up to tell you I can't get away.'

'Well, come over when you've finished.'

'What do you mean, when I've finished?'

'Well, when you've finished doing whatever it is you're supposed to be doing.'

I returned to my shooting stick and, rather despondently, lit a cigar. Within minutes the adjutant appeared from his tent like a jack-in-the-box, hurrying towards me doing up his Sam browne belt.

'Mr Astor,' his words came out in clipped syllables, 'what are you doing with that cigar in your mouth? What do you think you're doing?'

The answer to the first part was self-evident. Groucho Marx in a similar situation had answered: 'I would like to know a better way of smoking it.' As to the second part of his question, what in God's name did either of us think we were doing?

The uneasy days of peace were drawing in.

9

The Cliveden Set

It was really Claud Cockburn who created, or exposed (because I am still not certain in my mind which is the applicable term), the 'Cliveden Set' which became a matter of public controversy on both sides of the Atlantic before, during, and after the war. Claud Cockburn before the war was author, journalist, humanist and politician. His mind ranged wide, and so did his political affiliations. He worked impartially for *The Times* and later for *The Daily Worker*. He was (and still is) a humanist and an individualist. He founded the National Council for Civil Liberties; but before he did this he founded and edited *The Week*, a political broadsheet, run on a shoestring, which became for a short while a publication widely subscribed to and quoted by the world press. Claud Cockburn's particular form of editorship courted libel actions, but his lack of funds with which to pay damages repelled them. *The Week* first appeared in 1933, in fact just about the time that Hitler emerged on the international scene.

In 1936 Hitler marched a token force of troops into the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland, in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Churchill saw instinctively that this was the moment to check and rebuff Hitler: but Churchill was out of favour; Baldwin was Prime Minister; and the policy of appeasing Hitler was under way. *The Times*, owned by Major Astor (now Lord Astor of Hever, my Uncle John) and edited by Geoffrey Dawson, supported the policies of Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain. In April *The Week* suggested that Major Astor, Geoffrey Dawson and Mr Ormsby Gore (later Lord Harlech) had 'in fact played an almost decisive role in the shaping of the policy pursued by the British government in the Rhineland crisis'. In the course of the next two years Cockburn proceeded to attack the proprietor

of *The Times*, and its editor, as well as Lord Halifax, Neville Chamberlain, Lord Lothian, Lord Astor and his wife. He formulated the conception of the Cliveden Set, plotting and intriguing for the advance of Germany against Russia, and in the middle of the set he envisaged Lady Astor, fortuitously in a position of power, wielding a wicked and disturbing influence. Cockburn's judgement was not balanced, but his ideas spread.

The effect of the 'revelations' by *The Week* had a chain reaction in the rest of the Press. The validity of the charges raised against the Astor family was argued and questioned in London, Washington and New York. Although the charges made by *The Week* were overdrawn, as Cockburn himself later admitted, it is nevertheless true that there was a consortium of people, engaged in public life, which normally met at Cliveden or at 4 St James's Square, whose members shared a common view about the best methods of keeping the peace in Europe. Their views hinged on faith in the belief that Hitler treasured in his mind certain 'reasonable' demands for the restoration of Germany as a state on an equal footing with the other great states, and when these 'reasonable' demands were met a final and peaceful settlement could be reached without resorting to force. This view evolved into the policy of appeasement, a policy which resulted in making one concession after another to Hitler, each time assuming that Hitler's latest demand was his final one. This policy which now it is easy to designate as inept, if not disastrous, was nevertheless at the time popular in the country. Appeasement had the support of most of the politicians and virtually the whole of the Press. If those who met at Cliveden to discuss and advance the arguments in favour of appeasement can be said to have constituted a 'set', its members consisted of the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Geoffrey Dawson the editor of *The Times*, Robert Barrington Ward the sub-editor, J. L. Garvin the editor of *The Observer*, Lord Lothian and Lord and Lady Astor. If the 'set' in its wider sense implies people who habitually met for social as well as political reasons, but who also inevitably discussed the problem of Germany, to these names should be added those of Sir Samuel

Hoare, of Lionel Curtis of All Souls, Tom Jones, Sir Edward Grigg (who later became Lord Altrincham), Lord Brand and Walter Elliot who was Minister of Agriculture in the Coalition Government from 1932 to 1936; and, less frequently, Lord Halifax who was Foreign Secretary from 1938 to 1940. However, Lionel Curtis, Sir Edward Grigg, Lord Brand and Walter Elliot were not associated in their views with a policy of appeasement, and Tom Jones was never committed publicly to any political line at all. He remained on the sidelines, listening to confidences, editing his diaries and not committing himself to one side or another.

The myth about the Cliveden Set was that it acted subversively in order to introduce, by the back-stairs, a pro-German policy that the country was unwilling to accept. In fact the members of the Cliveden Set (and I accept the notional idea of a 'set' without defining too precisely what the word implies) supported the policy of the government of the day. The charge against its members was that they formulated the Government's policy, that they constituted not so much a pressure group as an element wielding power, acting without constitutional status. Its members were all, in one sense or another, politicians, and they employed every legitimate method that came to hand in order to propagate their views. They used the editorial and correspondence columns of *The Times* and of *The Observer*: they lectured at Chatham House: they made speeches. Their views were usually relayed, confidentially but frankly, to different members of the Cabinet. They supported an appeasing Parliament, in which Churchill, Duff Cooper, Lord Salisbury and Anthony Eden were conspicuous in their dissenting view. They supported the appeasement policy of Chamberlain, Halifax and R. A. Butler, the controversial but official government policy of the day which had the backing of the popular press: but they supported it rather more vigorously than most.

Now, with the advantage of hindsight, it is astonishing to think that people who were almost professionally high minded, who abhorred violence and who were prepared to act with the cour-

age of their convictions, could seriously believe that it was possible to come to any honourable arrangements with Hitler. The *Fuhrer* practised violence on an unprecedented scale. He broke every pledge he ever gave, except his pledge to try to restore, by any methods including war, the paramountcy of the German Reich. In order to understand even a little about how this was possible it is necessary to understand something about the characters and temperaments of those involved. A glimpse into the mind of even one of them may shed a little light on to a subject which at some future date, when all the relevant papers and diaries are available, will be more fully explored.

Philip Kerr, who later became Lord Lothian, was born in 1882 into an intensely religious Roman Catholic family. His father, Lord Ralph Kerr, was a soldier, and his mother was the daughter of the Duke of Norfolk. He was good-looking, sensitive, intelligent and impressionable, and at an early age developed the only passion he probably ever felt in his life—the passionate need for religion. At the age of ten he went as a boarder to the Oratory School at Edgbaston, and from there he went on to New College, Oxford, and during his first year at Oxford he fully intended to become a priest. But Philip Lothian was not the kind of person who could accept even his faith blindly. At Oxford he emerged as an intellectual. Although he did not renounce his faith, the process of intellectual inquiry which supplanted an earlier and unchallenged religious indoctrination also established certain doubts in his mind as to the nature of revealed truth. He was earnest and preconditioned by his early religious training. For the rest of his life he remained at heart primarily concerned with trying to discover where the point of truth in Christian teaching lay.

Philip Kerr's conversion away from Catholicism was gradual and agonizing, and his ordeal was increased by the knowledge that in revoking his religion he was offending the most cherished wishes of his family to whom he remained devoted. I have great respect for the fact that he tried all his life, rationally and conscientiously, to come closer to the truth of Christian teaching. The

fact that he faltered in his judgement does not detract from the measure of his intellect. He was a highly intelligent man who was also emotionally unbalanced. He was in some way incomplete; and he could not bring all his forces into play. His feelings, every part of him, became involved in the process of living in the context of a religion. Like most people who cannot relinquish their religious doubts he remained concerned essentially with moral standards. As a politician he found himself dealing with people many of whom had little or no moral basis to their actions.

At Oxford Philip Kerr took a First in Modern History and, after sitting and failing the All Souls examination, he then joined the staff of Lord Milner in South Africa. Lord Milner was at the time High Commissioner in South Africa as well as being Governor of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. He collected about him the ablest young men he could lay his hands on to help with the work of governing South Africa under the new constitution of the Union. Other members of his 'kindergarten' included Robert Brand (later Lord Brand), Geoffrey Robinson (who later changed his name to Geoffrey Dawson and became the editor of *The Times*), Lionel Curtis and John Buchan (the novelist and biographer who later became Governor General of Canada). Milner was the dominating influence in the lives of these young men who held important but relatively minor posts in his administration. Geoffrey Dawson was at first Milner's private secretary and went on to edit *The Johannesburg Star* where he was able to give publicity to Milner's policies. Brand was made secretary to the Transvaal Inter-Colonial Council and secretary to the Railways Commission. Curtis acted as Town Clerk of Johannesburg and later as the Transvaal's Assistant Colonial Secretary. Philip Kerr started as secretary to Sir Arthur Lawley, the Lieutenant Governor, and then as assistant to Brand. In a multi-racial society which not only included blacks and whites but Boer and British, where racial interests appeared to be conflicting, Milner evolved a new conception of federalism and a revitalized concept of Empire. From within his group emerged the doctrine of federalism applied in such a way that it would ultimately over-ride the various calls of nationalist feeling.

Under the cover of the Milner umbrella Philip Kerr had his first lesson in applied politics and practical administration. In his own mind he evolved the theory of ideal solutions as applied to political problems. Federalism, the theory of supra-national government, assumed as a notion a form of sanctity. Milner's whole doctrine of imperialism, with its sense of missionary purpose, made the deepest impression on his mind. Lionel Curtis, Dawson and Philip Kerr believed in Milner's genius: and they were too young, too impatient and too inexperienced to see all the implications of their hero's doctrines. They never really shook off his powerful influence, and were never unfaithful to it. Milner was by extraction a German. He had a passion for order and efficiency, a love of cut-and-dried solutions, and a contempt for British party politics. His respect for authoritarianism was scarcely disguised. After initiation in the Milner 'kindergarten' the rest of Philip Kerr's political life remained, in one sense, an attempt to find practical solutions to problems without abandoning these earlier ideals.

From South Africa Philip Kerr travelled to America in order to study the multi-racial problems as they appeared over there. He then returned to England to edit *The Round Table*, a quarterly review of imperial politics, which first appeared in 1910. Within the next two years he was showing early symptoms of nervous breakdown. His inner religious conflict was far from resolved. He put himself in the hands of Sir Bertrand Dawson (later Lord Dawson of Penn, physician to King George V) who dabbled, but only dabbled, in treating ailments from a psychological basis. Dawson advocated prolonged periods of travel and rest, of therapy *in vacuo*, a prescribed formula which would today be regarded as evasive and old-fashioned. As a result of following Dawson's advice Philip Kerr's condition became a good deal worse. He complained of brain fatigue and realized that his nerves were deteriorating. It was about this time that he met my parents and joined them on holiday in Switzerland. My mother's dilemma was in many respects the same as his. They made an immediate and lasting impact on one another.

Under doctor's orders Philip Kerr continued to travel and to 'rest', the assumption being that with a change of scene, a little shooting, a little 'safari', 'normal' rather than intellectual pursuits, his mind would begin to turn over more slowly. The prescription seems about as sensible as suggesting to a layman, who has doubts as to whether to take up Holy Orders, that he assume the clothes of a cleric and walk about the street for a while so as to get some feeling of vocation for the job. Anyway, 'normality', as it was envisaged in the mind of Dr Dawson, escaped Philip Kerr. He became increasingly anxious and distraught. He visited India and studied the Indian mystical approach to religious problems: he retired into a Catholic retreat still torn by doubts. Then, in the manner of St Paul, in a flash and with the assistance of my mother, he was converted to Christian Science. 'I am increasingly convinced', he wrote to Lionel Curtis, 'that Christian Science is the real key to all our problems, political and economic, no less than personal.'

In 1914 Philip Kerr was still in some senses an invalid, subject to lassitude and nervous fatigue. The 1914–18 war was the great and awful experience affecting his generation. For two years he continued editing *The Round Table*, evolving and writing many theoretical arguments in support of Federal Government and a post-war World Commonwealth in which Germany, as an equal partner, should take its place. With the war becoming increasingly bitter this must have sounded like idealism and pure theory conjured out of thin air. Inevitably he became concerned with the passive part which he was playing, conscious that most of his acquaintances of his generation were making the supreme sacrifice of their lives. He talked about joining the army. However, in 1916, he was appointed by Lloyd George, who had just become Prime Minister, to form part of a small personal secretariat. He continued to work for Lloyd George until 1921. Lloyd George took the place of Milner in his life, someone he could knock up against in trying out his ideas. He needed Lloyd George as the strong man in his life; but Lloyd George could not for long sustain this role. More permanently, deeply, and platonically, his

involvement with my mother provided him with a strong woman instead.

In 1917 came the Russian Revolution and Philip Kerr had no doubts but that Bolshevism, if it should prevail, would mean the end of Christianity, the end of tolerance, and the enslavement of mankind. My parents also shared this view, and later, when Hitler emerged as the leader of Germany and as the enemy of Communism, their fear of Communism made them feel rather more sympathetic to Hitler's régime than the horrible situation inside Germany could reasonably warrant. It is easy today to say that Fascism and Communism are first cousins, part of the same oppressive authoritarianism which adds up to the police state. In the nineteen-thirties the majority of Conservatives thought that Fascism was, in some ill-defined way, more or less all right. And the majority of Socialists thought that Communism was more than more or less all right. And in these judgements they were both all wrong.

After serving with Lloyd George Philip Kerr became secretary to the Rhodes Trust, in which capacity he concentrated on lecturing and writing newspaper articles, chiefly on problems of Anglo-American relationships. In 1939 he was appointed Ambassador to Washington in which role he was popular in the United States and acknowledged over here as an outstanding success.

Philip Lothian's life seems, in retrospect, to have fallen between two stools. He possessed talents and a certain artistic quality, yet being essentially a moralist it probably never occurred to him to adopt any of the many bold and creative roles of the artist. At the same time, having some of the sensibilities of the artist, and being a tortured character, he shirked the sterner responsibilities of the politician. He refused a seat in Parliament after a short and unhappy period as a junior Minister: he continued to deplore the machinations of party politics: and he declared himself to be a Liberal. In religious matters his views appeared more tolerant and had a wider scope than those of Mrs Eddy. Unlike her, he accepted the theory that good and evil were component parts in the complete character of man. Although my mother had converted

him to this new religion he became to her a sort of spiritual adviser. He also remained for many years under her spell. He accepted that Christian Science was the faith he had chosen in order to discover greater spiritual enlightenment but, unlike her, he did not attack other religions or deny that there were other approaches which were equally serious and might lead in the same direction. There was a certain poetic conception of life in the words that he wrote to a friend: 'Hell is this world with love left out, only efficiency and progress and passion and wealth left [in].' He was not only my mother's spiritual adviser: he was also her devotee. Ascetic, unworldly and at the same time somewhat gross, he was the friend of both my parents. My mother's theory, which she propounded, was that Philip was indispensable to my father. My father, not unreasonably, sometimes found it a bore having Philip Kerr round the house the whole time. In 1930, on the death of a cousin, Mr Kerr became the Marquis of Lothian.

The basis of Philip Lothian's appeasement was the feeling that he shared with Geoffrey Dawson, and with my father, that Germany had been unjustly handled by the Treaty of Versailles. Philip Lothian, Geoffrey Dawson and my father could not speak German, none of them understood much about Germany, all three of them admired what they supposed to be German thoroughness and efficiency, and all three of them had a mistrust of the French. In as far as my mother influenced the group (and I cannot see her not exercising an influence over its members) her ideas were formulated largely on a dislike of the French (largely theoretical because she knew little about them) which in turn was based on her antipathy for Roman Catholicism and her childish and parochial assumption that the Latin races were all unprincipled, bibulous and immoral. It was a harsh and a negative view, and because she could entrance and captivate, it had a disturbing and destructive effect on the minds of the men. More logically, my father feared that after Leon Blum's popular front, France might also go Bolshevik, and that the real danger to the Christian world lay not from the Right but from the Left.

The programme of Philip Lothian's appeasement consisted of

speeches, newspaper articles, letters to *The Times*, as well as discussions with President Roosevelt, Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Halifax. He also had two personal interviews with Hitler and with Goering, and in London kept in contact with the German Ambassador, the smooth and ingratiating Herr Ribbentrop whom I remember meeting at lunch at 4 St James's Square. The danger of Philip Lothian's position was that although he had no actual responsibility for government policy he had the ear of men who wielded power. In Germany he, and the rest of the Cliveden 'set', helped to fortify the notion that the pro-German faction in Britain was stronger and more influential than it really was. From the first he declared: 'Like most Liberals I loathe the Nazi régime, but I am sure that the first condition to reform it is that we should be willing to do justice to Germany.' He believed in the power of good even to the extent of believing he could reform Hitler and the Germany that supported Hitler. His comment on Hitler, after meeting him, was this: 'He has a dual personality, and creates mass hysteria, but he left me completely cold.' On the other hand, Ribbentrop, whose appearance and manner was nothing if not second-rate, he found 'a pleasant mannered fellow, but mentally a light weight'. By the time that Chamberlain went to Munich in 1938 Philip Lothian was disillusioned. By then he was in favour of declaring war on Germany if Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia although, wavering in his view when Hitler once again held a pistol at the Prime Minister's head, he felt that Chamberlain had made the best possible deal over a very delicate issue.

My father, who disliked the idea of Hitler and had an unconscionable respect for the theory of democracy (although in the home, like his father, he was a complete autocrat) pursued his arguments for appeasement, for a 'just' deal for Germany, in *The Observer* (with the co-operation of J. L. Garvin), in talks in the Institute of International Affairs (of which he was the Chairman), and in a series of letters to *The Times*.

Geoffrey Dawson and Barrington Ward went further than either Philip Lothian or my father in setting the pace. Major Astor, the

other subject for Cockburn's attack, did not appear to play an aggressive part in these affairs. He evidently condoned the policy of Geoffrey Dawson. My Uncle John seldom visited Cliveden where it was suggested, somewhat irreverently and without justification, that although he owned *The Times* he probably did not read it. He was a quiet man with a keen sense of responsibility and public duty, and he adopted the principle that the proprietor of a national newspaper should intervene as little as possible in its editorial policy. He could only have silenced Dawson by sacking him. He was quite prepared to do this if it was necessary: but in this case he was not prepared to back what seemed like a personal judgement in opposition to the prevailing view of the Government and the majority of opinion in the country. John Walter, the other proprietor of *The Times*, lodged an official objection to Dawson's policy.

Geoffrey Dawson and Barrington Ward believed themselves to be unusually enlightened, and they acted with a sense of mission. In assessing the character and the aims of Hitler they were utterly misled. In their methods of presenting the views of those who disagreed with them they were a little less than generous. In advocating, privately to Baldwin, that Churchill should be kept out of the Government, Dawson was presumptuous. But both Dawson and Barrington Ward were industrious and eminently respectable men. I held no reasonable or even unreasonable political views before the war, certainly none that I ever expressed. But I thought at the time, and I still believe, that Geoffrey Dawson was blinded by a form of self-conceit.

The most deplorable aspect of Dawson's policy was probably his respect for the 'average' view. I can only conclude that despite his earlier academic distinction he was no better than an average man. Barrington Ward eventually inherited his editorial chair and proceeded to make exactly the same kind of mistakes, based on exactly the same kind of bland assumptions, later, after the war, in respect of Stalin who was Hitler's only rival when it came to a policy of lies, murder and deceit. It was evidently difficult for conscientious men, prudish men, who dealt in theory and often

in ideal solutions, to comprehend the true nature of a villain when they met one.

The only member of the Cliveden Set, whose opinion was never sought, who was right about Germany as well as Russia, was my brother David who later was to inherit Garvin's editorial chair on *The Observer*.

10

A Military Interlude

Once the war started a new note of urgency, and a somewhat forced solemnity, was sounded in my yeomanry. Officers and N.C.O.s hustled, rather than strolled; but their purpose and their destination was no more clearly defined. The Adjutant, with a tremor of suppressed emotion, told me that I was not, after all, such a bad chap; and promptly dispatched me on a physical training course in Reading where, for a bleak fortnight, I pranced round a gymnasium in running shorts feeling about as cheerful as Oscar Wilde in Reading's jail. On my return, billeted on Newbury racecourse, feeling neither at war nor at peace, a wave of depression struck me with the force of a tide. Little by little I came to rely on visual images, picked out of nature, to relieve my mood and express the world of colour and harmony which was not supplied by this semi-military existence. Soon I turned to drawing and painting, and the study of painting and the lives of artists with the avidity of a man, deprived of nourishment, suddenly seeing food. The opportunities were few, confined almost exclusively to periods of leave, but relished with an intensity that became a new experience.

The stock joke—which struck me as a truism—handed down from the first war where life in the trenches in France was diabolical, was of the languid officer who said that he did not object to the discomfort or the food, or even the danger. What he found intolerable was the *people*. Charlie Fitzmaurice, a lifelong friend with whom I used to correspond, whose letters were graphically descriptive and who concealed his dislike of the army by making jokes against himself, maintained that he could put up with the food, the discomfort—and even just with the people—but what he could not abide was the idea of danger. (He was, later, continually meeting and defying danger, and was killed in Italy just

before the war ended.) What surprised me, and made me feel sad, was the number of people who at first appeared intensely relieved to have an excuse to join the army. Hosts of men were pleased to be called up, and regarded the summons to put on uniform, to assume junior commissioned rank and partake in the forced conviviality of the mess, as a form of release. What particular forms of hell, I wondered, had they suffered in their lives, with their wives or their worries, for this to be possible. The monolithic identity of the army acted as a blanket to their past, and offered them both an assumed status and a release from whatever it was that they had known before. My life had obviously been screened and sheltered compared to that of the majority of my fellows, whose lives I could only envisage inferentially, with an inference which carried little claim to reality. In this society of cockerels I was a solitary penguin, unable to fly and reluctant to waddle, and I even came to relish the moment when action, the world of confusion which battle implied, would bring a release.

My yeomanry regiment, composed of civilians whose soldiering in peace time was limited to a fortnight's camp and a few weekends' training in the year, unlike regular regiments in the British army, had little tradition and no detectable regimental spirit. In the 1914 war they had been yeomanry cavalry, containing many City elements, and were known to themselves and their friends as the 'Jerusalem Light Horse'. In those days their putative motto, as I understood it, was *When we charge, we overcharge*; or, alternatively, *No advance without security*. In 1939 the senior officers were county people, magistrates and masters of fox-hounds. Perhaps, since the regiment had, between the wars, been largely converted to Christianity it had lost its earlier opulent sense of fun and humour. We were reminded that we were yeomanry, a phrase which carried very little meaning, implying that we were not quite like other gunner regiments, which in one sense was certainly true. From an initial forced heartiness, which carried us through the first few weeks of hostilities (of a purely internecine sort), officers relapsed into periods of gloomy silence. Unable to shake off easily the habits of peace-time living we were unable,

also, to pick up the thread of military behaviour. Every evening after dinner we solemnly rose to our feet, raised our glasses of port and toasted the King. Every night, for months on end, so long as the supply of port lasted. My battery commander, a mild-mannered and kindly man, after a few weeks of self-imposed incarceration in his orderly room, began to look green with worry. Other heavy, rubicund men, uncivil and unmilitary, with a strictly parochial sense of their own importance, appeared to rely only on their military rank to exercise any authority over their more competent and enthusiastic juniors. To talk anything except 'shop' in the mess soon became a form of heresy, dispelled on one occasion by a colleague who, not having uttered a word for several days, came out of his reverie to announce that the atmosphere in the mess was enough to kill a guinea-pig. We were all, it seemed to me, like guinea-pigs, cooped up in a small hutch, living in our own dung. I entertained a futile hope that the senior officers would be sacked and replaced by regular soldiers who would at least know their business. Little by little subalterns started to apply for transfers to other units. The more enterprising spirits felt an urge to move on to better things. One or two colleagues, who became my friends, saw it as their duty to remain with the regiment that, as it later transpired, was never allowed to take part in hostilities against the enemy until the war was virtually over. For the nine months I spent with my yeomanry I felt utterly miserable.

Immediately after the evacuation of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk we were sent to defend the beaches of the Sussex coast between Bognor Regis and Selsey Bill against the anticipated German invasion. A fortnight later the War Office (I thought wisely) took away our guns and rifles and issued us with staves, before posting us as garrison troops to Northern Ireland. I saw my chance to escape and joined a small force, the remnants of a military mission which had returned from France and was re-forming as War Office troops. My bluff territorial colonel seemed willing, almost pleased, to release me. I had not much respect for him, and he looked on me as a rebel.

The irregular nature of the duties of what was then called the G.H.Q. Reconnaissance Unit, and was later known by its code word 'Phantom', were more to my tastes than yeomanry and gunnery, and my first parade with my new colleagues certainly showed an improvement on anything that I had experienced so far. It is, I think, worth recording in detail as being uniquely English in style and carrying through the amateurism of the past into the inexorable professionalism that lay ahead. The setting was a small manor house near the village of Lechlade occupied by the officers of this newly re-formed squadron whose men were billeted in the stables, lofts, and outhouses attaching to the farm. The parade, which numbered officers and other ranks only recently brought together, was made up of men of different regiments, guardsmen, riflemen, gunners, cavalry and signalmen, each of whom responded in different ways to certain words of command, drill being not uniform between the various branches of the service. For our squadron commander, Major Warre, a happy and debonair cavalry soldier, this was a particularly felicitous occasion. He had just been promoted to field rank, he had recently been awarded the Military Cross in France, he had acquired from a gypsy a long-haired lurcher, he had bought from his tailors a new pair of riding breeches which matched his new top boots, and last, but perhaps not least, he had a genial and portly peer of the realm as his second-in-command. I, and other junior officers, stood in line in front of the four rows of men waiting to see what would happen, how we would individually and collectively respond to orders which might apply to guardsmen, horsemen, gunners or riflemen. We were brought to attention and remained at attention while Major Warre went into a whispered conference with his sergeant-major. The air of expectant silence was suddenly rent by him tapping his boots and letting out a piercing scream: 'Lord Banbury, you will come out here and stand in front of the men.' There was another lull and then the sash-window into the dining-room was raised sufficiently for Lord Banbury, wiping away the remains of breakfast from his moustache, to answer in a fruity voice: 'All right, Tony, but don't *shout*.' I was unexpectedly

brought back into a world of human beings which reminded me, too, of the fantasy world of Bertie Wooster in which the military image had little place.

My new commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel Hopkinson M.C., was short, square and very military. He spoke in a controlled bass voice that started somewhere near his boots. He was friendly and extremely well-mannered, but made no bones of the fact that he thought war was not only necessary, but a good thing. Without it, he feared, the nations of the world would become decadent and slack. As far as his personal tastes were concerned his favourite pastime was courting death. Our regimental headquarters were in Richmond Park, and the air-raids on London acted on him like a tonic, a reminder of the vital, hazardous aspect of battle. The only time he took any leave, he managed to persuade the R.A.F. to take him as a tail-gunner in one of their daylight raids into France. Later he commanded the First Airborne Division and was killed with his leading troops fighting in Italy. He treated me well and I liked him, although on the surface we appeared to be opposites in character. He had interesting, even idiosyncratic, ideas about training and efficiency. One day when I was going on leave he asked me whether I had any special plans; and when I told him I had none he suggested I might employ my leave by going to hospital and having my appendix out. 'But why, sir?' I asked him. 'I think my appendix is all right.' 'But when you go into battle,' he answered, 'you will be a better risk as an officer if you don't have an appendix. I had mine out on leave in India.' To miss a battle because of an appendix would have been a disappointment he would not have wished on anybody.

In the second winter of the war, 'Hoppy' was the guest of a few of his junior officers in London. He dined with us and we promised to take him to a club in Kingley Street which was at that time a fashionable brothel. The inspiration was not his, and although the idea of women alarmed him he chuckled manfully at the prospect of doing anything as dangerous as this. After dinner, before we set out on the second leg of our journey, he invited us to drink a glass of port with him in the United Services Club.

'Michael, just ring up the duty officer and tell him I'll be late tonight.' I got on the telephone, and the corporal in the orderly room said the duty officer could not be found. 'This is ridiculous,' I answered, 'who is the duty officer?' The answer came back that it was me.

Although Hoppy was in some respects a fanatic he was also forbearing. I hurried back to the orderly room feeling contrite, realizing that my absent-mindedness had put a blemish on the evening just when we were on the point of opening up new vistas in our colonel's life. However, my lapse had given him the excuse to return to regimental headquarters, rather than find himself conducted blindfold into the hinterland of Kingley Street. Perhaps after all we would never have got him there? The idea of a jolly party in a brothel was somehow preposterous in relation to this square, heroic little man—he only came up to my shoulder—who loved men and manly behaviour. He would, I began to think, almost rather have faced a firing squad than a prostitute. At Cambridge, when he had been an undergraduate, he was unmatched as an escapologist and steeplejack, finding new and hazardous ways of leaving and entering his college after the lodge gates were locked at midnight, climbing up to the tops of domes and pinnacles, leaving behind some small memento, such as a chamber pot, as a surprise for the authorities. There was something ill-conceived about our undergraduate escapade into Kingley Street.

At two o'clock that morning he visited the orderly room. He had something on his mind. Should junior unmarried officers be granted short leave for the express purpose of keeping assignations with ladies of easy virtue? Was it really necessary for morale, and military efficiency? He was posing himself this question, not me. As the subject was so indelicate he phrased it jocularly. It would look strange appearing on the notice board in Part I Orders. It might put ideas into the mind of the R.E.M.E. officer who seemed quite happily married to his scout cars and other vehicles. There was something particularly droll about the lugubrious R.E.M.E. officer. There was something quite funny about being called a

Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineer. It didn't sound possible. The lateness of the hour encouraged Hoppy's light-hearted speculations. Most nights he worked late in his room, managing on very little sleep. How nice of him to think about his junior officers in this way. He finished briskly, on a military note.

'Try turning out the guard at four o'clock this morning.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Good night, Michael.'

'Good night, Colonel.'

Somehow I must keep awake until four o'clock. I must not let him down again. He would, I knew, do anything to help any of his men.

England, at this time, was a nation alerted and grimly determined. With my yeomanry regiment safely dispatched to Northern Ireland I was reconciled, if not exactly pleased, to being a soldier. Invasion, as we thought, was imminent; and its prospect, although appalling, at least made our task clearly defined. Military responsibilities at last took on the aspect of reality and relieved us of more personal feelings of responsibility. Part of our personalities went into deep freeze to be thawed out gradually once the war was over. We followed the pattern of army training, moving to various parts of the country, on occasions alerted an hour before daylight to scan the coastline where invasion was expected, at other times living in quieter inland areas carrying out routine training. I learned to find ways of occasionally being on my own so as to avoid the claustrophobic feeling I still experienced living at close quarters in an officers' mess. As the danger of invasion receded the great enemy became boredom. Training became repetitious: we came to know too much of each other's mannerisms and foibles: and I came increasingly to dread the prospect of a protracted period of life in the confined company of men. I longed, above all, for some release into the world not governed by military behaviour.

In 1942 I was moved to billets in Sussex with the rest of my squadron, of which I was by now second-in-command. There I renewed my acquaintance with Barbara whose home was a

few miles away. She was working for Archibald McIndoe, the plastic surgeon, who was re-forming the burnt features, and saving the lives, of the young R.A.F. pilots in the East Grinstead hospital. In the dark, tailored uniform of the Red Cross, which offset her blue eyes and blond colouring, Barbara looked even more appealing than I had remembered her across the ballroom floors in London before the war started. Dutton Homestall became an open house whenever I was able to visit it. Its worldly, comfortable but contrived medieval decoration acted only to emphasize the shy, candid feeling conveyed by the girl whom I found myself visiting in most of my spare time. The sense of purpose she clearly felt towards her work in the hospital was in turn offset by her appreciative humour and her delightfully infectious laugh. She had many suitors, more conventionally minded and predictable than me, friends she had known in peace time who now, posted abroad, admired her from afar. We both found ourselves isolated by the war from the company of the people we each wanted to see. Our affection ripened. Two months later we were married.

Our marriage lasted for fifteen years and our divorce was at my instigation, an unlovely business conducted through the intermediary of lawyers, in the course of which for the first time in my life I confessed to an adultery I had not committed, with a lady whose name I never discovered, and whose charms were not apparent to me the first and only time we met. The divorce, apart from this farcical and mildly embarrassing episode, was a harrowing experience for both of us, rendered more poignant by the fact that we had four children whom we loved. It was a terrible step; but one that neither of us later regretted.

Jakie was also in the Phantom outfit (I never think of it properly as a regiment), and commanded the squadron that operated with the Special Airborne Services, mastering the hazards of jumping from an aeroplane by parachute. His squadron took part in the raid on Dieppe in which a great many Canadians were, as I believed, killed quite needlessly. I waited anxiously for his return. When I thought of him in danger, his effervescent wit, which

acted on people like a tonic, seemed less important than his honest and generous spirit. He turned up after that eventful raid, unperturbed. He had commanded his landing patrol from the destroyer *Calpe* which, as well as bombarding Dieppe, had shot down a German fighter. 'We couldn't stop to pick up the pilot,' said Jakie, 'he bailed out at about two thousand feet. And in any case his parachute didn't open.'

In 1944, fully trained for the role we had to play, my squadron became actively engaged in the battle of Normandy as part of the Canadian army, the second wave in the war of the Second Front. In our marshalling area on the south coast of England I caught a last glimpse of my yeomanry, still unarmed, now entrusted with the job of controlling the traffic on its way to the ships. One night, after what seemed like interminable waiting, we drove to Tilbury and embarked on a Liberty ship, the battle of Normandy having moved inland and the beaches by this time being equipped with ports and harbours improvised by army engineers.

My experience of the scene of battle came two days after we landed, when I was posted to the Second Canadian Armoured Brigade, and it came as a relief, exhilarating, to be involved with danger which the years of training had taught us to regard with a feigned contempt. I had never seen death in any form. Happily my first encounter was with a German, a poor inflated scarecrow turning green with decay whose limbs I accidently, but without remorse, ran over in my jeep. It was no worse than seeing a weasel, deprived of its beauty in the stiffness of death, pinned up on a post by a gamekeeper. It conveyed no greater sense of surprise or disillusionment. Subsequently the fresh bodies of our own men, in the familiar and homely khaki, conveyed a feeling of horror, of the ghastly wastefulness of life that battle entailed. I have the doubtful asset of having a nose like a bloodhound. I can often pick up different scents wafted over a long distance on a breeze. Worse than appearances was the stench, the sweet foetid smell of human decay which I learned to distinguish from the rotting corpses of animals, of the cows which lay on their sides like helpless dirigibles with their legs stretched

stiffly upwards and outwards as if in an attempt to ward off the onslaught after the lightning had struck. Noises, like corpses, became categorized into causes of unconcern, even rejoicing, and of apprehension and momentary feelings of helplessness. The crack of our own artillery, comforting at a distance, was the voice of retribution and attack; deafening at close quarters, calling back a retribution on itself, it was the thunder of a symphony reaching its crescendo of wrath and power. The plonk and explosion of a mortar shell lobbed from the enemy lines, with its higher trajectory, with its more individual and less synchronized choral rhythm, were premonitions of a swift and unlucky death. In the day-time we had much with which to occupy our minds. At night my stomach, reacting in sympathy to the sounds of explosions, performed a series of convolutions, my intestines making the kind of protest that I was not allowed to make. In my slit trench I enjoyed the company of a flea, which lived with me and off me for days, and whose avaricious and evasive quality in the end preoccupied me more than the sound of enemy explosives which had a more lethal but a less personal emphasis.

This interlude, enacted at the point where battle was engaged, did not last more than a fortnight. At ten o'clock one morning on the road to Falaise the Lancaster bombers of the Royal Air Force, from their bases in England, mistook a concentration of Canadian guns and tanks for their target. We were waiting on our start line ready to begin an attack which was to be preceded by a heavy bombardment of the enemy positions. I noticed, at first well to my rear, the dust and flashes and repercussions of bombs. To my flank an armoured car had drawn up, and inside it were the commander of the Tactical Air Force, Air Marshal Coningham, and a colonel from the operations branch of the Canadian army who had come to view the aerial assault. I hurried over and told them I was in wireless touch with corps headquarters. Would they, I asked, send a message by my wireless indicating what was going wrong. The precise-minded colonel, conscious of the bombing and even more impressed finding himself in the company of the Air Marshal, told me that what we were

witnessing was artillery fire. We had another look through the binoculars. I told him that what we were looking at was bombs not shells. It was quite obvious (I did not add) to anyone except a staff officer. He said it could not possibly be aerial bombing. I turned to the Air Marshal. He had fought in the desert and I felt he must have learnt the difference, visually and sonically, between shell fire and the explosion of aerial bombs. He remained silent. All of this had occupied five minutes of our time. The report I sent back giving warning that our bombers appeared to be dropping their load behind our front line lacked, therefore, the supporting opinion of these two senior officers whose voices might have curtailed the extent of the catastrophe. I was a small cog in this vast machinery, too small on my own to call off a major bombing attack. Suddenly the full force of the raid, which continued with one brief interruption for forty minutes, fell on us. My car and wireless were put out of action, but not before the armoured car from army headquarters had gone hurtling down the road. I told my men to jump under the nearest vehicles. We lay, crouching like insects, while the earth shook and roared all round us. We buried our faces while one thunderous percussion followed another. A bomb miraculously dug a deep crater beside my scout car, scorching us with its blast and pelting us with gravel, its full lethal effect carrying to some target further removed from its point of impact. I noticed the celluloid cover of the map case in my hand was burning. In an attempt to relieve the tension of the men crouching beside me I gave them, peremptorily, an order, telling them not to move from their positions. The remark, literally interpreted, sounded unnecessary. There was nowhere to move to in this inferno.

The start of my first battle, the first set-piece for which we had been so carefully trained, ended in anti-climax. Several hours later, in a scene of carnage, an officer from my squadron arrived to find out if there was anything left of us. Apart from my corporal, who had a fragment of steel in his shoulder, the few men in my patrol were unscathed. A pall of smoke gave the illusion of twilight.

After a few days, re-equipped with a half English and half

American patrol, I was despatched to the American sector to report on the progress of some of General Patton's forces, and in this way was able to observe, at close quarters, the behaviour of my other fellow countrymen in their military rather than citizen guise. My commanding officer told me, also, that I would be good at getting on with the Americans.

The transition from 21st Army Group to the American Third Army was like leaving a closely integrated family who had been carefully brought up to live on a tight budget, and joining a rambling community, held together by a different code of law, which displayed an extravagance unseen in the British sector. The initial impact was very like anyone's might be on visiting the United States for the first time. On the surface there was a casualness, a friendliness and an informality that went side by side with a ruthless feeling of drive and urgency. On better acquaintance the informality was seen to be superficial and deceptive. American discipline, though careless about detail, was more punitive than ours. Although their junior officers had less authority and were not trained to look after their men in the way that we were, their enlisted men would often be sent for long periods of detention for an offence which, in a British battalion, would only result in a reprimand. They were also more rank conscious than us, exercising a strict observance of the gradations of rank in order to combat their national dislike of all titles, even military ones. Their system, although outwardly looser than ours, was actually more rigid and less open to improvisation. Their supply of equipment and rations was lavish, for the most part more ingeniously devised than ours; and yet their meals, by the time they were prepared, tasted as nasty as they looked. In other ways life in this army coincided with my impressions of American suburban society, a highly organized community displaying every kind of modern mechanical invention, living on the edge of a jungle, its members religiously observing a code of conventions which they believed might exorcise the spirit of the jungle constantly threatening them. In the expenditure of life and casualities they were prodigal, meeting death with an offensive spirit that

spoke much for the virility of their nation. The flabby, rubber-soled colonels, waddling down Bond Street, the soft city-built staff officers in evidence in England shortly after the invasion of Pearl Harbour, were nowhere to be seen. Their place was taken by fit-looking men who worked tirelessly all night and all day. In the sectors where our two armies operated alongside one another there developed a mutual respect and sense of reliance. Where our fronts were widely separated there grew up a suspicion that the other ally was having an easy time of it, a mutual feeling of resentment that was seldom justified by a knowledge of the facts. The sector to which I was assigned was several hundred miles from the British front, the sector of the U.S. XII Corps, commanded by Major-General Eddy. This was part of General Patton's army, and Patton's antipathy for General Montgomery (as he was then), an antipathy which was mutual, was reflected vociferously by some of his subordinates.

After leaving the British sector, where the enemy was most heavily engaged, driving south through Rennes, Tours and Orleans was, initially, like taking a holiday, leaving the scene of violence and destruction and entering into a danger-free area where, with the front broken and still many miles away, the sense of victory was not marred by any immediate risk of reprisals. A conquering army, ever advancing, carries with it a sense of power, a heady and intoxicating feeling which through the ages has been the soldier's final unwritten award for his fighting. In towns and villages the population greeted us with kisses, wine, and open arms. We were liberators. As a mere liaison officer with a few men and a wireless set I felt something of an impostor. Despite their wild expressions of relief, liberation by foreign armies was, for the French, a bitter pill. It was not one they would quickly forgive.

My assignation allowed me a certain discretion as to how I operated, which made my job easier and more enjoyable. It was with a spirit of confidence and the feeling of an emissary about to engage in a quasi-diplomatic mission that I reported one evening to my new American headquarters, to a colonel whose name I cannot remember but whose features and manner are still

imprinted on my mind. Our cordialities took an unexpected turn. After reporting my presence and the nature of my mission I was greeted by an explosion of feeling. This surly, grizzled man, a regular soldier in his army, started by asking me when the lousy British Limey bastards were going to be shamed into showing enough guts to kill a few Germans. I winced. As he continued his peroration it dawned on me that this was not just a crude form of joke. The British army, I knew, was fighting every inch of its way. It was still faced by most of the German armoured divisions on the Western front. And here was this contemptible creature, sneering. I was finding it difficult to keep my temper. I told him I had not come several hundred miles to listen to rubbish like this. He muttered 'Limeys'; and I told him he was a miserable, ignorant bastard. The description, which possibly struck a familiar note, checked him, and he relapsed into silence. This was a most inauspicious start to my mission, hardly what my commanding officer had envisaged. It was rendered doubly ridiculous when I discovered the officer I had been addressing had only come into the tent where we had met in order to take the weight off his feet, and that he was not the man I was supposed to report to. When I came to know him better I found he was obsessed by the idea that the Imperial British were the natural enemies of his country. Only a direct rebuttal of his attitude could make any impact, and my unpremeditated reply to the futile, spurious quality of his hatred was in fact the only answer he could comprehend. However, as we had to live together we had to come to some sort of terms. We recognized an armed truce. He appeared to have no friends, and during the ensuing weeks, when I saw him sitting in the corner of the mess, stroking his chin and looking broodily in my direction, I imagined he was regretting the one opportunity he had missed of putting an English officer under arrest and having him court-martialled. His greeting and his manner were in no way typical of the rest of the staff. They were nice people to work with, and they made me feel I was part of their society.

Many years later I thought of my encounter with the grizzled colonel when a New York journalist, an acquaintance of mine,

was discussing the antipathy of Dean Acheson, when Secretary of State, for Anthony Eden, and the difficulties which this produced in their negotiations. Eden used to lapse into the habit, peculiar to his conversation, of calling Acheson 'my dear', an appellation that made the Secretary of State quietly furious. Had he growled at him and met him head on (perhaps not using quite the bargee terms I had employed) their relationship might have improved, but then Eden was trained to diplomacy and I, in this instance, had no such disadvantage.

For the rest of that autumn and early winter we lived and worked together amicably, and when General Patton's offensive ground to a standstill (through no fault of General Patton who would have gone straight on into Russia had he been given the chance), we took up winter quarters in the town of Nancy. Our front remained stationary with nothing more than local attacks, carried out to remind the enemy of our presence and to take a few prisoners so as to keep ourselves informed of his strength and preparedness. The air was fresher; the nights cooler with a nip of frost in the early mornings. Leaves began to take on their autumn colour. I was billeted with a frail, elderly French couple, a retired concierge and his wife who had been a dressmaker. At first she regarded me with terror, as if I might eat her; but as the days wore on, and I appeared quite docile, she came to accept me. Her first hint of this was a small, unexpected kindness, a hot brick wrapped in flannel which I found warming my blankets when I got into bed. A day or two later, in the early morning, she brought me a cup of hot ersatz coffee. That was tantamount to an invitation to drop into her parlour in the evening and talk to her and her husband, and hear how terrible life had been under the Germans and how she had made a point of never speaking to them. She conceded that they were always correct in their behaviour. She had had a German officer billeted on her. He had been different. He was a nice family man, very courteous. He sometimes supplied her with meat and sugar. Of course, she disliked all Germans. She prattled on nervously, exhausting her husband with her needless apology.

Her spare bedroom, with its stained, faded wallpaper, its few heavy pieces of furniture and its paper flowers for decoration, became my friendly lair, a place in which to be alone and read and get away from the company of the military. Outside in the streets the occasional American Negro soldier, strolling in the evening with a French family, carried a small child on his shoulders. Young men from the prairie states of America walked with girls on their arms, respecting the chance to enjoy some female company. Others, city-bred in appearance, seized their chances more impetuously. Life assumed a more variegated pattern: and war seemed, once again, neither righteous nor victorious, but an insane nightmare in which violence and brute force were allowed to reap their vengeance on the decent, gentle order of humanity. Occasionally I was asked into a French house, but the more prosperous citizens of Nancy whom I met in this way appeared to take a particular delight in telling an English officer how dreadful they thought the Americans were, and telling the American officers how pleased they were to be in their sector and not to find themselves over-run by those boring English.

At the Academy of Art I introduced myself to Marcel Corrette, a member of the staff who taught painting and lithography, a little man with a bad wheezing cough who carried his troubles lightly. He agreed to give me drawing lessons. In my spare time, sometimes for an hour, sometimes longer, I went to his house and worked in the room he used as a studio. Whenever he invited me I shared his evening meal with his family. In exchange for American army rations, which his wife translated into appetizing food, he lent me pencils and paper and worked with me, giving me instruction. What mattered, he told me, was to learn to observe closely and not worry about technique, which came in any case with practice. All methods, he stressed, were good; what counted was the results. My earlier doubts were revived. Should I not, once the war was finished, abandon everything and devote my life to painting, whose study and progression seemed to lead into eternity. Was it really such an evasion of responsibility to study one limited aspect of truth, the truth of my own vision, worked

on and expressed in tone and form and colour? If I had the humility of Marcel Corrette I could do this, if I were not so intrigued by the performance and character of people and facets of life which could not be expressed simply in visual images. I asked my mentor whether he thought art had any social function. He was in no doubts, and expressed himself in this way. We all live in a world of mediocrity and confusion. A man, coming out of the street, goes into a gallery and looks at a picture. He is not interested in being thought cultured or educated. Something else, inside himself, has prompted him to come and look at a picture. He stand and stares for a long time. Gradually he begins to catch some of the feeling which the artist has tried to express. He begins to share the artist's vision, to detect the painter's sense of order and urgency picked out of a world of disorder and disappointment. He is lifted on to the same plane as the artist. They are both men and they share a common dilemma and a common point of distinction. Perhaps here, in front of a work of art, he can find what he has been looking for, a sense of the dignity and the intrinsic importance of man as a creature.

Corrette's own painting was somewhat stylized, his technique too easy to detect, the results lacking the illusion of magic, of some unseen hand driving the brush strokes over the canvas. He was an artist all the same, his ability to observe and appreciate running ahead of his ability to execute a finished painting. He was also an excellent *père de famille*, looked after by his wife and in turn setting the tone at his table. His two sons came home from school in the evenings, quiet boys who sat in the kitchen waiting while their father ladled out the soup and handed us all a slice of bread, not touching their food until I had first tasted mine. Corrette's greatest treat was American cigarettes, whenever I could produce them. His family was poor, and there was little in any case for them to buy in the shops, but they were too courteous to ask for anything. Whenever he thought I was over-recompensing him with my supply of rations he would protest, and later offer me one of his lithograph drawings; and before I left Nancy he gave me a small oil painting, a study of an equestrian statue which I had

previously admired and which hangs on a wall in my house today. When, at short notice, I had to leave and move hundreds of miles away I asked the American quartermaster how much tinned food, coffee, and chocolate he could spare me. With his countryman's customary generosity he piled great boxes of supplies into the back of my jeep. I told my batman to unload them in the home of M. Corrette. Many months later, when the war was finished, a parcel of lithographs arrived for me in London, addressed as far as I can remember to 'The Captain Astor, The British Army, Londres'.

A little before Christmas I was summoned back to Brussels for some leave. The members of the staff of 21st Army Group whom I knew were by this time well established in the city. They had a better idea of making the best of a good job than the Americans, demanding a higher standard of comfort and a more vivid social life, looked after in their billets by batmen and orderlies, their lives in some ways approximating to their pre-war standards. In restaurants in the evenings men who, before the war, regarded privileges as necessities, had their special tables reserved for them. The more attractive of the unattached ladies of Brussels ignored considerations of military rank, recognizing officers increasingly by their civilian identity. The American army could never have created this atmosphere of opulence and gaiety and lack of concern for military precedence. Their army had a more Germanic tradition. Also it had not been billeted in Brussels at the time of the Battle of Waterloo.

Brussels provided a needed change and a welcome return to the ways of the British army; but after four days my leave was cut short. The Germans had launched a new offensive and I was despatched, post-haste, to General Ridgway, the commander of the U.S. 18th Airborne Corps which had been rushed up from its rest area to take part in the battle of the Ardennes.

The Ardennes offensive, the last desperate throw on the part of the German army, had taken the Americans by surprise. In a blanket of fog, which grounded the air forces, a heavy thrust by German tanks had penetrated deep into the American lines and,

for a few days of alarms and excursions, allied troops, having lost touch with their commands, were falling back and away from the advance of the German armoured divisions. My first task was to find the headquarters of the 18th Airborne Corps, which was not immediately easy, and my first attempt to do so landed me up with some of the remnants of the American 75th Armoured Division who had been engaged with the enemy for the last two days and were trying to regain touch with their main formation. It was a cold and frosty night, a few days before Christmas, and I joined this column moving down a road away from a place called Mamelot which the Germans, temporarily in control of the battlefield, had reached. Dog tired, my small part of a straggling column halted in some farm buildings. Sentries were posted, and we lay on the floor of a barn, wrapped in our overcoats, to catch a few hours rest. The cold was intense but we did not keep awake long enough even to make the usual cup of hot tea. We fell on the floor and were asleep in almost one and the same motion. After about an hour I was jerked from sleep by a sound of scuffling, followed by a thump and the noise of a body falling to the ground. Clutching my revolver I opened the door of the barn. A cold blast of air swept through the door and a member of an American tank crew, who had not lain down for forty-eight hours, turned and swore as he attempted to grope his way back from sleep. All was quiet outside and then the silence was broken by muted voices and squeaks of affection coming from the foot of a hay-rick. Trooper Mullins, the driver of my scout car, had chosen this moment, the only moment of course that he would have, for making love (if that is what it should be called in such inauspicious circumstances) to the woman, more harridan than maid, whom I had noticed earlier staring at us as we climbed out of our vehicles. There was still an hour left before we had to rouse ourselves and move again, an hour in which I could enjoy another sleep, even if Trooper Mullins could not. All the men in my patrol read *The Daily Mirror*, in which the British Tommy was usually depicted as a square-jawed fellow, advancing bayonet in hand to meet the forces of tyranny, thinking of his wife and kids, writing cheerful

letters to his mum. In the flesh he was a more human and perceptive—though not a more selective—creature than the one caricatured in the popular press.

General Ridgway, who later commanded the allied army in Korea and then assumed command of the N.A.T.O. forces in Europe, struck me as being the outstanding Corps Commander of the allied side, or of probably either side. He was a burly man with an unusually quiet and polite manner of speech. His voice, that carried a soft Southern twang, conveyed a feeling of hidden power as well as courtesy, and he shared the American generals' habit of showing himself at the front, with the difference that in his case once he found himself there, if things were not going to his liking, he would often go to the level of the platoon battle and demonstrate how things should be done by personally leading an attack. In a man with less authority in his command this might have been a weakness. Generals are not, after all, supposed to be all that expendable. In his case these excursions had the effect of not only showing his troops that his orders had to be carried out, but of making his presence felt throughout his whole corps, and the American soldiers in his command were as efficient as anything that the best of the British or the German armies ever put into the field. Whereas Patton was a flamboyant leader, cursing, driving and exhorting, Ridgway's quieter methods were just as effective.

On my first night at this headquarters the battle was still fluid, vague and uncertain. 18th Airborne Corps, rushed quickly to the scene, was still deploying on its front: other American troops, overrun by the Germans, were retreating; and it was not possible for anyone to tell where most of our forces were or which point the leading German tanks had reached. The enemy were advancing, there was little news of their whereabouts, and the staff officer sent out to try to locate their leading elements had failed to return from his mission. General Montgomery was in command of the overall battle and I was reporting by wireless to his Tactical Headquarters. The Germans, somewhat whimsically, pin-pointed General Ridgway's whereabouts and dropped into it dummy parachutists and flares. At two in the morning I made out my

report which I showed to Ridgway and asked him if he had anything he wanted me to add to it. 'Yes. Say the situation is completely under control. It is under control and just the way I want it to be', consoling words which I quoted as coming from him. These paratroopers were an impressive lot, and being surrounded by Germans had become their second nature. Before putting my message into code I passed it to the intelligence colonel so as to check my information with his. He was surrounded by papers and a map which indicated a series of conflicting reports that he was trying to equate, and outside a sentry had just emptied his carbine at some target, real or imaginary, that walked in the night. His comment was laconic. 'Just add from me that the situation is under control and my name is Jesus Christ.'

When I had left U.S. XII Corps the corps commander had given me a medal, one that was being widely distributed. When I left General Ridgway he called me in to say goodbye, and asked me if I had a wife and any children. He then started fishing about in a duffle bag and produced a box of crystallized fruits which his wife had sent him, and asked me to pass them on to my wife, with his compliments. It was a charming and unexpected gesture from a man who was controlling a battle.

My next posting was to Field Marshal Montgomery's Tactical Headquarters where, for a change, I was on the receiving end of the information which was being sent by the Phantom patrols at all hours of the day. Almost immediately after I had reported to this small headquarters, which controlled the plans and decisions of two armies, the Field Marshal summoned me to his caravan for a briefing. Enormously thorough, he left nothing to chance. He asked me a number of questions about myself, my education and my aspirations, his clear hawk-like eye making me feel I was being searched by a form of mental lie detector. He then proceeded, with the help of a large map, to explain just how he had conducted the operation of his armies since his leading troops had landed in Normandy on D-Day. After this he told me to go away and read all his operation orders and his various instructions to his staff still stationed in Brussels. Some of these were formal

documents, some were highly secret, others were engagingly colloquial, showing his use of a trite form of slang, revealing some of his candid and unpublishable opinions. Immediately I was made to feel in a position of trust, a member of the peculiar system he had devised for integrating his staff, a system which in large measure accounted for the enthusiasm and good morale of his armies. His attitude, both in speech and in his written instructions, was plain, and immediately intelligible. He was the most professionally minded man I had ever met. Unlike the politicians and newspaper editors of my acquaintance Montgomery had given the whole of his life and the whole of himself to the business of learning everything about his job, the job of defeating his country's enemies at the point of battle. In pursuing this dedicated role he had paid a price in other respects.

Montgomery's intimate lieutenants were his liaison officers who saw him every day. Their role demanded an attitude of veneration to their chief which he appeared to need and which, happily, I was not called on to provide. In his mess, in which I fed only by invitation, he relaxed and left behind the big issues of the day. In conversation he was always ready to teach, to answer any question on a military subject; and this he did brilliantly, paying junior officers the compliment of giving them his whole attention. In his own surroundings it was impossible not to like him. It was impossible, too, to imagine him as anything but a soldier, and at the same time a super-schoolboy, the ultimate kind of prefect, more rigid and ruthless than other school prefects. By the narrow definition of his own standards he had carried off every prize—prizes for games at school, prizes for leadership, finally culminating in the prize of a Field Marshal's baton. According to his own standards no one had done better than he, and he remained convinced of his own greatness. He respected others, and encouraged their progress; but his respect was measured by the standards that he applied to himself. In his mess he seldom divulged his opinions on politics or broader issues. These were reserved for the benefit of a few important people, politicians or very senior civil servants, the prefects and members of his Sixth Form.

Montgomery was a great commander in battle, a fact which all the men in his command appreciated, other than a few malcontents. He not only won battles: he also took care of his soldiers. Had he been a more complete human being, less rigid, less single-minded, he would not today use the platitudes and generalities which are the hall-mark of most of his speeches; but the Eighth Army and 21st Army Group might not have had the advantage of his fanatical and ruthless quality, which the Eighth Army needed before the Battle of Alamein. In him Puritanism was deep-rooted; although he was not, in a contemplative way, a particularly religious man. The Puritan ethic, in my belief, encourages in people almost limitless powers of self-deception, despite any measure of their intelligence. Its voice is too righteous and inhuman to allow them much self-criticism, denying in the name of God (or some other authority) man's innate propensity for coming to terms with himself. In this dilemma a man must insist that other men follow a pattern, or a group of patterns. The solution to his problems has to be cut and dried; and in turn people become docketed and categorized in his mind, and their true identities become obscured.

Montgomery had the reputation of being unorthodox. In fact he was a classically minded man, nursing an inordinate respect for institutions. In the war he showed his abilities and skill by seizing and making the most of his chances. In unguarded moments, in the company of officers who were his juniors in rank and would not challenge his authority, he revealed a simple and touching desire to be friendly. It was this element of modesty, one he so quickly concealed, that earned him their respect and affection. Men who have to take decisions affecting the lives of thousands of people are, at such moments, reputedly lonely. This condition was, I suspect, familiar to Montgomery from an early age. He did not particularly fear it. It had become incorporated into his training; and he looked askance at the behaviour of people who, dreading loneliness, found a wide variety of ways of avoiding it.

My last view of 21st Army Headquarters was of the surrender of the German army. Its delegates arrived, one and two at a time,

and were then followed by some very senior German officers. There was nothing more military than a German general and the British junior staff officers of my age and rank seemed strangely affected by their presence. It was now the end of the war and the officers who had volunteered for service when it started had become imbued by a feeling of respect, if not a love, for militarism. The sight of two of my colleagues saluting German generals, practically clicking heels, dancing round them like blackcock in the spring of the year performing the steps of their courting display, left me with the feeling that the requirements of etiquette could be carried too far. In venerating Montgomery they also found his counterparts in some way irresistible.

11

Under Restraint

The image of the politician, which a discriminating public finds so unappealing, is built up not so much by his character or his record of achievement—which is seldom remembered—as by the way he presents himself in dimensions larger than life-size. In the United States the standard gestures which warn us of the approach of this hyperbolic feat are, first in importance, the smile, confident, remorseless, extending across the face so as to give even the most perpendicularly featured the semblance of a pumpkin. Next is the double handshake (right hand extended for the shake, left hand elevated for the shoulder embrace), or the self handshake (for novices only), emulating the successful gladiator of the boxing ring. The formula must go something like this: friendliness and optimism equals confidence, and confidence is the highest common factor of success. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in his prime knew what he was doing, developed the habit of addressing millions of people whom he had never met in his life as 'my friends'. In Britain this 'gimmick' is regarded as crude. For a Conservative, the gaze should be pensive rather than radiant: for a Socialist a laugh is permissible because it shows that he is one of the boys. Funny hats in the manner of Senator Kefauver are 'out', but brief-cases and rolled-up umbrellas are 'in'. Confidence again is the password, but as befits an older civilization confidence is not accepted as something that can be created by the use of the technical tricks of the evangelist, although this sometimes works in the case of the Liberal vote, and can be applied on a Socialist ticket in certain constituencies in Wales and south-west England where a good proportion of the electors are chapel people. These, only slightly exaggerated, are the stock gestures, the lowest common denominators, of the politician when he is wooing his public.

But behind his grimaces and blandishments, before one discovers the inner man—which is sometimes not at all easy—there is still an over-life-size approach to ordinary everyday problems which, in meeting him, one has to face. There is much to debauch the character of a man in public life. The Member of Parliament is conscious that he represents some fifty thousand electors (which is clearly an impossibility); he believes that he is at the nerve-centre of affairs and therefore should be qualified to express an opinion on anything that is happening; officials of one sort or another accord him a form of respect not granted to artists, authors, businessmen, or members of the professions; and chairmen of public bodies, including bodies concerned with the arts, who owe their appointment to a Minister of the Crown, although they may unreasonably despise the politician and his trade, are absurdly apprehensive of the use of the parliamentary question. The good party man is also under another disadvantage which he shares with few other members of society. He can seldom admit publicly, or even privately to a colleague, that he has made a mistake; and he is constantly liable to be reminded of statements that he made, in the heat of an argument or by way of jest, or in a speech, five, ten or twenty years ago.

The best politicians, those with the greatest ability and appetite for their responsibilities, become grossly overworked. The worst politicians, those who are not granted knighthoods or pacified in one way or another, incline either to petulance or, through the medium of publicity, to a form of exhibitionism. There are, of course, exceptions to this. There are always some men with the element of greatness and the constitution of the ox who take their place in history on the roll of honour. There are also some, less easily distinguished publicly, who carry through their public life a sense of service which they consider compensation enough for the work they undertake. Although the politician is treated with reserve by the public his occupation is an honourable one; and in England, unlike in the United States, cases of financial corruption in politics are extremely rare, and most Members of Parliament know they would do a good deal better financially if they

were not in politics at all. Some others appreciate that if they did not carry the letters M.P. after their names their presence in life would pass unnoticed except by their wives, and they would be given few opportunities of opening their mouths to speak. All M.P.s are in Parliament because they want to be there. The large majority love the Palace of Westminster and, once they have been there for any length of time, feel utterly lost if they lose their seats, a fact which should be taken into account by us, the public, when we appraise their antics at the time of a general election.

While the fate of the German army was being settled on Lüneburg Heath I was wrestling with the problem of whether to await demobilization and then, either in Paris or in London, become, although a little late in life, an art student; or whether, as an interim measure, to return to England and contest a seat in the general election. The choice of artist or politician seems an odd one, belonging to the standards of the dilettante and an earlier age rather than the brave new post-war world; but as alternatives the two decisions did not appear to be mutually exclusive. I hoped for the chance of going into some tough Socialist seat and trying my hand at the hustings; and from that distance from England it seemed unlikely that an undistinguished soldier, with no political experience, would stand a chance of being accepted for a safe seat. The election was to be the excuse for returning to England for a few weeks and seeing my wife and child.

The safe parliamentary seat, when it was offered, was an unexpected prize, too tempting to reject. At the back of my mind, in accepting it, I believed I was acting in an opportunist and rather cowardly fashion in rejecting the more searching life of an artist. I had lived so little with artists and had become so cut off from anything outside the philistine world of the army, that I came to wonder whether my talents existed outside my imagination; and I followed my doubts rather than my inclinations.

When I left 21st Army Group Tactical Headquarters, Field Marshal Montgomery gave me a photograph of himself, my third trophy which, like the American medal, was also fairly widely distributed. With these, and the crystallized fruits, the spoils of

war stowed in my luggage, I started back on my homeward journey, accompanying, as far as Brussels, the Chief of Staff of a German Army Group to whom I was acting as escort. I was headed for liberation, and he was headed for incarceration; and on the journey I wondered what fate would have been in store for me had our positions been reversed. He was a brutish man to look at, the caricature of the bull-necked Prussian officer. In the aeroplane we exchanged a few perfunctory courtesies in French. He smoked endless cigarettes, and I gazed out of the window at the pock-marked landscape that showed the course and destruction of battle. At Brussels airport he was mobbed by photographers and appeared humiliated by his predicament. A few weeks later he committed suicide. I was glad, then, that I had remembered to accord him, at his moment of embarrassment when he emerged from the aeroplane feeling, presumably, isolated and dazed, the correct valediction of a salute. This was the soldier's form of address, a final mark of respect for his profession and rank, and he had appeared grateful and had shaken me by the hand. I thought the salute was the only language he really understood.

In London the affairs of Conservative Central Office were in the hands of Ralph Assheton and Harold Mitchell, who gave a perfunctory interview to most prospective candidates. Assheton did not inquire into my political views, which perhaps he assumed to be the same as his. Mitchell, in no doubts about his brand of Conservatism, asked me one or two questions. We did not really take to one another and our conversation petered out when I told him I was in favour of nationalizing the coal mines. He saw me to the door fearing, possibly, that if I stayed longer I might suggest the abolition of the monarchy. However, despite the casual nature of these preliminaries, my name was submitted, with a list of others, for several seats in the south of England, and in a few days' time, in some trepidation, I presented myself to the selection committee of the Tunbridge Wells Conservative Association, a collection of well-mannered ladies and gentlemen whose views I felt I might not represent but whose interests I felt willing to support.

Due, probably, to the good reputation of my Aunt Pauline who lived in the district, and to my deceased Uncle Bertie who had represented the neighbouring constituency for many years in Parliament, and no doubt to my parents' reputation for public service, I was placed on the short list of two, the other candidate being Gerald Williams who lived near there and had been nursing the seat. The day of reckoning arrived and I had to undergo the ordeal of making my first political speech to a small captive audience of some twenty elderly people. In those days I had not learned how to do this. My speech was over-rehearsed, it contained many too many subjects, and the result was disastrous. The only kind of platform speaking I had attempted until then was, when ordered in the army, giving lectures to the troops on current affairs, and for this there was a standing rule: in a hall crowded with men, the first thing to do was to shout out: 'Can you hear me at the back?' Like the orderly officer's question at meals of 'any complaints?' it was a question that did not often evoke a reply. At Tunbridge Wells I was shown into a small hall by the chairman, Lord Hardinge, who made a few opening remarks: and I was only conscious of three rows of gentlemen and old ladies leaning forward in their chairs, some of them cupping their ears, anxious to catch what was being said. I was nervous and uncomfortable and wondered what would happen if, when my turn came to speak, I started by shouting: 'Can you hear me in the *front*?' Later in my political career, in moments of despondency on a public platform, I usually found some aspect of the proceedings that made me smile inwardly, and stopped me, outwardly, looking as if I were going to be sick. On this occasion I was already finding it difficult to assume the concerned manner and the righteous approach which befitted a public man.

My speech, delivered like a saying-lesson memorized from notes, was a long drifting dissertation, touching on defence, full employment, nationalization, capital punishment, the school leaving age, housing, and heaven knows what else, until suddenly in mid-sentence I lost the drift of my remarks. Overloaded with figures and facts, conscious that my audience was becoming

bored, my mind went blank. An elderly couple in the front row appeared to be asleep: but others behind them did not. Indulgently they waited for the rest of the speech. With any luck Lord Hardinge was asleep? I looked at him. He was doodling on the back of the agenda. I asked him if he thought I had talked long enough. He sportingly suggested that I could finish what I was saying. I could not explain that this was not possible. And so I forged ahead, plunging into the problems of Empire, the quagmire of India and our relations with Mahatma Gandhi where everyone, I reckoned, could reasonably expect to flounder. A little polite applause covered my confusion. Ten minutes later, by popular acclaim, Gerald Williams was adopted candidate.

Later, when I became a more experienced speaker, a Member of Parliament of some two years' standing, this same dreadful thing—the mind switching off, in some way atrophied by the nervous system—happened again before a large audience at the Mansion House in London. The occasion was a centenary appeal for an orphanage in my constituency, financed by a City Guild. I have never properly grasped the function, or for that matter the pleasure, of City dinners. After a drink in the ante-room the guests at the top table marched in couples to their places to the accompaniment of music played by a small string orchestra. Somewhere in the back of my mind I had a prepared speech. During the meal I managed to forget it in an absorbing conversation with Lady Violet Bonham Carter who was willing to discuss her distinguished father Lord Asquith. By the end of the meal, in answer to my inquiry, she was explaining the point of Anthony Eden. David Maxwell-Fyfe, who later became Lord Chancellor, gave the first speech and I had asked Harold Nicolson to be the other guest speaker. Maxwell-Fyfe spoke appositely and held the attention of his audience. Harold Nicolson was brilliant and witty and gave them something to think about later. I was the next speaker. The master of ceremonies, a henchman in a red cut-away coat, banged on the table and bawled, in a voice that could be heard in Shoreditch, 'My Lord Mayor, my lords, ladies, Members of Parliament, Sheriffs and Aldermen of the City of London', etcetera, 'pray silence

for the Honourable Michael Astor, Member of Parliament.' And silence was what they got. I rose from my chair, murmured 'My Lord Mayor, ladies and gentlemen', and was turned to stone. The seconds passed like minutes. I stood, facing a microphone and a sea of faces, my mind a perfect blank. People shifted uneasily in their seats. I tried thinking about the nature of eternity against which occasions such as this would not matter at all. And then, after what seemed like fifteen minutes, all at once ideas came flooding back; and I spoke easily, and with emphasis. My father was my guest that evening. It was the only time he heard me speak and he congratulated me afterwards on the manner of my delivery, but suggested that the dramatic pause at the beginning had been, perhaps, a little drawn out.

My next call as a candidate was to a different lot of people in a Surrey constituency whose main voting strength lay in south suburban London. This constituency contained a small and diminishing rural element whose members were greatly outnumbered by the voters in Purley, Coulsdon, Sanderstead, Caterham and Warlingham, housing estates which had grown up rapidly between the wars, and whose population commuted daily to their offices in the City. Its Conservative Association appeared to lack the sense of tradition, and the feeling of continuity, found in industrial seats and in the more settled rural areas, a tradition which sometimes helped to establish a relationship of trust and friendship between the Member and his supporters.

At Tunbridge Wells the people I had met shared an implicit faith in the Primrose League, in Britain's imperial destiny, and in Anthony Eden. The monarchy, the Church of England and the public schools system were subjects too sacred to mention. In the civil service, the armed forces, the professions, in offices and banks, as landlords and tenant farmers, they respected the precepts of quiet and gentlemanly behaviour. To them being Conservative meant being patriotic, principled, and resistant to radical movements and ideas. My Uncle Bertie, who had lived in the Tunbridge Wells constituency, was loved and respected as a 'sound' man, which really meant he was recognized as a typical squire and

country gentleman. He seldom spoke in the House of Commons, and even this was regarded as reassuring. It emphasized the fact that he was not flamboyant, and his supporters were content to accept that, though he was silent in the Chamber, he was invaluable to the working of party committees. When, in my stumbling way, I wooed the selectors at Tunbridge Wells, I looked on them as friends.

In contrast to this rural constituency East Surrey had no definable pattern. Its leading figures expressed a certain urgency of purpose which appeared to be unaccompanied by any dedicated sense of service. Their attitude was something new in my experience, unlike the impression I had of the only constituency I had seen at close quarters—the city of Plymouth whose civic and seafaring traditions were supported by a friendly, sometimes raucous, but invariably unpretentious working class. There, for instance, my father had been able to conduct a series of general election campaigns against his Liberal and Labour opponents, and to number among his opponents as well as his supporters some trusted friends who met in his house for dinner and with whom he found common cause as well as disagreement. The members of the committee of this Surrey seat appeared to base their good opinion of themselves on the fact that the constituency represented numerically one of the safest Conservative strongholds in Britain. Their elated feeling that the most Conservative world was implicitly, and in every way, the best, appeared to lack a solid foundation, and was supported chiefly by a bias of class differentiation.

In this atmosphere, politics, so it seemed, could quickly degenerate into nothing better than a matter of intrigue and vested interests. I began to wonder who were really going to be my supporters and who my opponents; and whether I could find any friends with whom I could speak unguardedly; and, if not, whether there was some greater purpose in politics which would justify treating constituency affairs as a masquerade. Was it possible simply to play a role, without altogether losing one's self-respect? What was the particular prize that made this worth doing?

After a number of interviews with the selection committee I

was invited to call on the titular head of the association who finally had to sanction the choice of the candidate selected. This invitation was to lunch, on a Sunday, in his house on the outskirts of the constituency. Oversleeping, relapsing into unpunctual habits, and vague as to his whereabouts, I arrived half an hour late to find he had finished his meal. He accepted my apology with indifferent grace. He was a balding, grey-haired man, wearing knickerbocker trousers into which he might have been fitted with a shoe horn. He wore a brand new Old Etonian tie. His expression was crimped and I thought a little furtive, like an elderly moneylender who had not received much change out of life. However he offered me a drink and appeared to scrutinize me while I gratefully swallowed it. He showed me into the dining-room and told me to help myself to food.

The questions he asked, while I ate, impinged more on what I considered my private affairs rather than my political beliefs. The food, though by this time cold, was lavish. My host confessed he did not believe in rationing. It was a socialist measure the coalition government had introduced in the war. He opened by asking me what school I had been to. Unless he was masquerading in the wrong tie he could not take much exception to my answer. Perversely I tried to imagine what he must have been like some forty-five years back. He must, I reckoned, have been a shifty little boy, with probably enough sense of self-preservation to keep out of serious trouble. As I glanced round the room everything in it looked new and unused, particularly the Tudor furniture. Next he asked me whether I belonged to any good London clubs. I told him I did and that they seemed quite good to me. Would I join the Carlton Club if I were elected to Parliament? I told him if I were in the House of Commons it would seem pointless to join the Carlton Club. He did not grasp the point of this. He told me that he had met my wife and it was because of the good impression she had left with him that he was considering my candidature. A sensible wife, he told me, who could learn to speak in public, was a great asset to a man in politics. My wife, I did not mention, was sensible enough not to become a public

speaker. Her stepfather, he had learned, was a popular man and a distiller.

Next he asked me whether I liked sport and if I played any games. He seemed to think he was going to catch me out on this. Before the war I had, in fact, played three games of minor county cricket against athletes of the distinction of Godfrey Evans and Jack Martin, both of whom later played for England. I mentioned this: my undefeated innings at Canterbury against an England fast bowler. Undeterred he asked me whether I played golf. Undeterred, and inventing the rules of the game as I went along, I told him a fib. I told him I was a very good golf player. Next he wanted to know whether I always drank. This seemed like a catch question. I told him I drank only with lunch and dinner. He then moved into his stride. But my family was rabidly teetotal was it not? My parents had spent their lives attacking the drink trade, had they not? *He* was a brewer. What kind of a man he wondered, could I be? I thought of how my father, who had never, as far as I knew, attacked the drink trade, had dedicated his life to public service. What had this man done, I wondered, except look after his own interests? I let him run on and tried to look as Conservative as possible. He pointed out that he hated Socialists and Liberals and foreigners, and went on to explain that English life was being threatened by radicalism and foreigners, particularly Americans. His privileged position, tenuous as I judged it at the best of times, appeared to him to be on the verge of destruction. As he propounded his philosophy I began to wonder whether there was much in his position worth saving. He hated much and appeared to love little. He was not, as a prototype, my idea of a Conservative. He was, I remembered, a magistrate and responsible for administering justice from the bench. I convinced him that I, at any rate, had no immediate plans for attacking the drink trade. He continued about the iniquities of supertax, of the 1944 Education Act, and in fact about most attempts to keep up with the twentieth century. I allowed him to persuade himself that I was his idea of a 'normal man', someone who lived in clubs or on golf courses, and hated the Socialists rather more than the

Germans, and who agreed that nothing in the traditional way of English life should be changed. With the truth, by silence and therefore by implication, I compromised. Two days later, with his backing, after a further speaking match, I was adopted as candidate. I had learned, all too easily, the rudiments of essential deceit.

My rivals in the finals of the speaking contest were an elderly knight, who confessed that he could not speak in public, and Vice-Admiral Hughes Hallett who had a distinguished war record and later became a Junior Minister, and who on this occasion frightened his selectors by his quarter-decking manner. I spoke indifferently but found no difficulty in answering the questions. My association with my constituency, which was to last for more than five years, started on a basis of mutual incomprehension and, as far as its leading lights and myself were concerned, remained uneasily poised between this lack of comprehension and a certain incompatibility as to political aims.

Once the general election was under way my chairman urged me to invite some prominent public figure to come and hold a meeting. I felt at the time that our need for extra votes was not very great, but my supporters seemed so anxious to invite a luminary of the political universe that I persuaded Lord Lovat to come and take the platform. He was the ideal man for the occasion: Young Lochinvar, and a peer, extremely handsome, and a dashing leader of commando troops, as well as having been for three weeks a member of the 'Caretaker Government'. In the 1945 general election most of the meetings were well attended, but on this occasion the hall was crammed, and a good many women turned out to see what Lord Lovat looked like in the flesh. The idea was that we should both speak and that we should then answer questions from the hall. Lovat's speech lived up to his reputation. It contained a few racy jokes, and implied a contempt for the whining attitude of the Labour Party who had been harassing the Government for not building houses for the people at a time when Government had been engaged in bringing a long and arduous war to a victorious conclusion. After we had both

spoken, questions were fired at us, most of them specifically directed at Lord Lovat who was the glamorous figure.

And then, in the middle of the hall, an intellectual-looking lady of spinsterish appearance, aged about forty, with horn-rimmed spectacles and a sheaf of notes in her hand, rose to her feet and in cold and querulous tones said she had a special question for the candidate and hoped that the candidate would answer it himself and not shield behind Lord Lovat who, she added rather acidly, had so far done most of the talking. I moved uncomfortably in my seat, nodded in her direction, and waited to hear what she had to say. The questioner looked and certainly sounded like an opponent. I must, I realized, treat her seriously and not try to shake her off with a joke. (She was, I later learned, a Baptist school teacher and a worker for the Labour party.) The candidate, she continued, was no doubt conversant with the Beveridge Report, particularly with section five of that Report, and with sub-section three of section five of that Report. (What in heaven's name was she talking about?) Had his party, she wanted to know, anything to offer the country better than the suggestions contained in this sub-section? Impulsively I wanted to stand up, shout 'No', and sit down again. She continued to stand, despite repeated shouts of 'Order'; and I tried to gather my thoughts. I went to the front of the platform and told her her question was very interesting. I was here to answer questions. Playing for time I muttered that she had asked me something about the Beveridge Report. She told me to speak up. I looked into the middle distance, utterly lost for inspiration. Had she, I asked, read the *whole* of the Beveridge Report? (Was there any hope of a way out in this direction?) The questioner was still there, erect and challenging, fixing me with a glassy stare as if I were something that belonged under a microscope. I had no idea what I would have said had she answered that she had read the whole of the Beveridge Report, other than offer her my congratulations. Luckily she replied that she had not read it *in toto*. From behind me Lovat was muttering something about asking her whether she had read it in Japanese. But surely, I suggested, before asking

me a question like this she should read the *whole* of the Beveridge Report? She nodded, willing to concede that on a trivial point of detail she may have been guilty of negligence. I asked her whether she had read the whole of the Conservative Report on Social Insurance. She had not. Throwing caution to the winds I advised her to read the Uthwatt Report, the Samuel Report and the Scott Report. (One was about town planning, one was about coal, but they all sounded like hot air to me.) My questioner was still standing, looking puzzled by this reply, which sounded a trifle inconclusive. As an afterthought, as if to imply that she need not bother her head with all this dry stuff written by civil servants, I added that if she managed to finish reading all these reports she would probably let out a pretty big report herself; and with that I sat down. There followed a brief moment of silence, shattered by the young bloods in the hall breaking into catcalls and howls of what could only be described as coarse laughter. My questioner went down in her seat as if pole-axed. It only then dawned on me the full implication of what I had said.

I should at any rate have looked contrite. It was no good. In trying to repress our laughter both Lovat and I started to giggle. The noise in the hall which had become general gradually subsided; but neither the commando hero nor the candidate was in a fit condition to accept the next question. I could only indicate rather limply to my chairman that he would have to step into the breach and do this for us.

To what extent the final riposte to the question was ironical, malevolent, or merely badinage I have, to this day, no concise idea; although I suspect it comes under the heading of what is termed a Freudian lapse. To the young men at the meeting this school teacher symbolized all school teachers, and they delighted in finding her quietly led up the garden path and given the shock of her life. I learned one lesson that day: that it was not necessary for a candidate to try to answer a question he did not understand. My lady questioner also learned her lesson: which was never again to ask me a question.

And so it was, by methods not strictly to be found in the hand-

book for candidates, I found myself translated to Westminster at an exciting time in the political life of the country, when Churchill's powers still dominated the House of Commons even though he spoke from the Opposition benches with no chance of defeating the Government in the division lobbies. At that moment politics seemed a lot of fun. I deluded myself into thinking that I could in the mornings study painting at the Slade School (and later at Camberwell under Victor Passmore, which I did for my first eighteen months in Parliament); assume my place in the House after lunch; take a challenging part in debates; attend to the needs of my constituents; catch up on my reading which had lapsed in the war; and find myself a home and a farm in the country and enjoy a family life. '*Achilles ejecit sua inertia*'? Not even Achilles tried to expand on so many fronts at one time.

Before Parliament assembled I had my first constituency 'case', and had I been gifted with second sight and been able to read the future in this small incident I might have seen that the jack-of-all-trades and master-of-none role which I had assigned to myself could not, in the end, work. The constituency case was droll, and a little sad; but viewing it in retrospect it emphasized the incongruous nature of a Member of Parliament's work. During the electoral campaign all candidates received hundreds of letters, but in the mass of my mail my attention was drawn to letters which arrived from one man at least twice a week. He declared himself an ardent supporter of mine, he commented most favourably on my speeches, and said that there was a matter of great national importance he wished to discuss with me as soon as the election was over. Although the matter of national importance did not sound convincing the only noticeable eccentricity that he showed in his letters, other than his overwhelming admiration for my speeches, was that he wrote at the bottom of each, in postscript, the words 'pro bono publico'. This might just be an expression of fervent patriotism on the part of a man who was consumed with a political flame. After the result of the poll was declared he wrote and invited me to lunch with him, and asked me in his letter whether I liked oysters, and if so would I lunch

at Wheeler's restaurant. I replied that I liked oysters and would be delighted to lunch with him at Wheeler's, and so he invited me to a meal at the Royal Automobile Club. We sat down at a small table in its crowded dining-room and he proceeded to tell me, at considerable length, what his trouble was. He had, about two years back, returned to his house one night in the black-out and mistaken his dustbin for a German parachutist, a mistake which, he suggested, anyone could make. He then, on his own, engaged the dustbin in mortal combat and was later arrested by a special constable for causing a disturbance. Next his wife and family had lodged a complaint about him and he had been despatched to a lunatic asylum. He had been discharged from the lunatic asylum just before the end of the war; he had never had a moment's insanity in his life, and he wanted public redress. He did not feel the matter should stand there. He told me he would then like his wife put in a lunatic asylum. His position in law remained obscure but he left me puzzled how it came about that he had ever been discharged. Constituents, it was evident, could be a problem; and while trying to serve their needs it might be just as well in future to keep them at arm's length.

12

Westminster

The convening of the new House of Commons was seen, by all its Members, to be an enthralling moment in history. Even I, who from the start had a feeling I had arrived there on false pretences, could not conceal my curiosity to see what the Government, the first Labour majority which the country had elected, was going to be like. The question to which everyone was then seeking an answer was: how socialist is a Socialist Government? How modulated were the Members of this one who had served for five years in Churchill's coalition? The Labour Members could not contain their joy, mingled with a feeling of surprise, at being returned to power; and there was a feeling among Conservatives, whose numbers were so depleted, that they had been deprived of their natural prerogative which was to govern. The Labour Party had thrived for a long time on the feeling that it was the minority party, the party of the underprivileged, the party of revolt and opposition, and to a certain extent the party of ideals. Now it was in charge of affairs. From registering over the years mournful and angry sounds of complaint it now, with one raucous voice, started to crow. No one at this stage appreciated the nascent jealousies, the conflicts between the doctrinaires and the empiricists, the antipathies between its left and right wings, divisions which defy a precise definition, which were to paralyse the Labour Party in the course of the next six years.

The large preponderance of Members who had served in the forces were found on the Tory benches. A few serving Members on both sides, who were not regular officers, were incautious enough still to wear their uniforms, a mark, perhaps, of respectability and patriotism. Mrs Braddock, militant and never lacking courage, the new Member for the Exchange Division of Liver-

pool, did her best in those early days to appear as publicly hostile as possible to all Tories everywhere, and as contemptuous as was feasible to parliamentary custom; an attitude which she, as others before her, soon abandoned. Another Labour Member showed what he thought of the place by sitting in the front row below the gangway wearing an open-neck shirt and no tie. The proletarian garb was otherwise not much in evidence. Most Members wore dark suits and white collars, and as the days wore on I noticed the tieless Member, sticking no doubt to his principles, becoming increasingly embarrassed and developing the habit, to cover his embarrassment, of whistling a solo tune to himself to keep up his courage. In a matter of weeks he too was dressed more or less like anyone else. The House of Commons clearly had a personality that no Member could ignore or defy. The most pugnacious and determined crusader, holding egalitarian views and defying tradition, was quickly tamed. The rabble-rousing of the hustings and the broad humour of the assembly hall had to be considerably modified and tailored before it fitted the Palace of Westminster. The pompous alderman, with an inflated idea of the importance of his speeches, who for years had exhausted the members of his city council, spoke with less assurance to a more critical audience who showed their impatience by reading order papers, talking to each other, nodding off to sleep, or leaving the Chamber. Where a Member failed to catch the mood of the House the results, for him, could be embarrassing. The House of Commons knew how to kill the wrong kind of joke, or the wrong kind of exhortation, icily and mercilessly, without even having to make the effort of lifting its finger. Therein lay its strength, the power to winnow-grade the chaff from the wheat, the strength derived from its long tradition. It also took on the form of a closed society, belonging to those who belonged to it, and not properly assessed by those who only observed its performance from the wings.

On our benches Sir Will Y. Darling, another new Member, appeared the very caricature of a Tory, with black-striped trousers, tail coat, butterfly collar, large silk stock and top hat which he wore in the Chamber. His appearance was deceptive. He was a

Scot, a self-made man, who had once been a member of the Independent Labour Party and took the greatest delight in tormenting the Labour Party at which he was an artist, using humour rather than malice and driving his points home with short, vigorous, staccato phrases, rounded off in his crisp Scots accent. In due course our Whips Office had to warn him not to be too satirically funny and reduce the House to convulsive laughter after eight o'clock in the evening because it made it harder for our front bench to reintroduce the air of authority and solemnity into their winding-up speeches which the occasion needed. Walter Fletcher looked unique, vast but at the same time nimble, with an appealing kind of ugliness which the Labour Party for some reason felt should belong to their benches. The solitary representative of the Independent Labour Party, James Maxton, who at Glasgow University had been an active Conservative, with his deep-set eyes and sallow complexion and heavy forelock of hair falling over his face, looked the part of the anarchist but was too well liked as a humanist to cause alarm. On the opposing benches Attlee 'the sheep in sheep's clothing', looked like the dormouse in *Alice in Wonderland*, brief, abrupt, intelligent and self-effacing. Churchill, slightly stooped, looked just like himself, undaunted, although the result of the election had come to him as a shock.

The House of Commons, as an entity with a definite character of its own, is not an easy subject for the writer who is not primarily concerned with the machinations of politics, or with the relative validity of particular causes and the emphasis placed on those causes by its different factions. It is, after all, a political caucus, and its other aspects, though illuminating, are incidental to its purpose. Yet is has a corporate identity, hard to define and never static in character. Its identity is, I believe, feminine rather than masculine, like some great corporate woman, volatile, shifting, embracing, demanding, jealous of her children, nourishing them, seducing them, and acting often unreasonably: a great corporate woman composed almost entirely of men. At one moment the atmosphere in the Chamber, I learnt, could be flat, deadly, conducive only to fitful sleep. Members were driven

out into the library or into the smoking-room in order to avoid a feeling of stale air and even staler speeches; only to return an hour later to find the atmosphere charged and electric. From bellicosity and uproar, which always sounded worse to the visitor than to the initiated, it could drop into a mood of friendliness and banter interspersed with passages of scintillating wit—moods which again, more like a woman than a man, were impossible to predict. Again, should anyone be rash enough, or bold enough, to try to paint its portrait, its kaleidoscopic image which is perhaps its main attraction for those not immediately concerned with a political career, he would discover that the dignity and serious purpose of the House defies levity, and its ponderous quality defies an altogether serious treatment, at which point my analogy with a woman calls for a certain revision. Churchill, who comprehended and dominated the House, in as far as one individual was ever allowed to do so, at times played on it like an organ, an instrument of power and melody capable of driving a theme into the far recesses of the mind; and at other times, with his form of humour which had to ridicule the absurd or the pretentious, or goad the cowardly or challenge the bully, could remind each Member of his human and fallible quality. Eden, who remained an enigma to me during the six years in which I failed to get to know him, was a House of Commons man, his intuitive powers responding to the feminine, or temperamental side of the Chamber. Oliver Lyttelton, whose training was in the City, despite his knowledge of affairs, never had the touch. Oliver Stanley, perhaps forensically the wittiest speaker on our front bench, had it to an inch; but like an artist with a rapier in his hand he conveyed the feeling that his purpose was to outwit rather than to wound. Aneurin Bevan had his own way with his own Party and his speeches were more effective when rendered than read. Stafford Cripps, whom all respected and whose integrity made him a man to love despite his frigid and somewhat ascetic exterior, appealed to the House by the clarity of his statement which was only marred by the restricted number of words he employed in his vocabulary.

The House of Commons that I knew contained most of the ingredients of the community that it was supposed to represent. The cream on the top of the jug always displaces a smaller area than the milk on which it floats, and the results, when shaken up, amount to a small element of food and a bigger element of water, an essential nourishment which is nevertheless unstimulating to the palate. Political autobiographies which portray the House of Commons, particularly those which tend to rely on indiscretions, also usually fail in at least one respect. Their authors like to convey a picture of unchallengeable argument. Hugh Dalton, for instance, mirrored himself as a creature triumphant, forging new policies, applauded by his army of supporters, hated and almost feared by his enemies, until his unfortunate eclipse. His portrayal is just nonsense. It is true that he had a certain magnetic power over the more easily seduced members of his own side, but the over-life-size image creeps into the story. The salutary and admirable side of the House of Commons is that it never allows anybody completely to get away with anything. There is always some critic who sees through the façade, who knows as much about the subject as the exponent, and who can translate public or political appeal into terms of practical justice and reasonable legislation. Some Members remain strangely unaware of the salutary and admirable side of the House. Such creatures sometimes try to make their reputations at Question Time, relying on publicity, pomposity, and a use of English which, even by the standards of the more assiduous civil servants who draft Government Bills, has not the elements of intelligibility. Such members feel safe with verbiage, portentous phrases and attitudes which can no longer be caricatured. I sometimes feel that they should not masquerade in human shape, that they should be decked out as walruses so as not further to confuse the complex character of the human race, or, like a former Rector of Stiffkey, be sent to Blackpool and placed in barrels to be stared at by the public on payment of a shilling. Perhaps they have a genial public which remains under the impression that their myriad questions are impelled by a thirst for knowledge. Parliament is their platform,

their alibi, and constitutes the greater part of their lives. Of essential, or even genuine, curiosity they possess not one jot.

Another character which the House could assume, other than that of a woman, a legislative assembly, a debating chamber, an anaesthetizing chamber, a stage for drama or a charnel house, was for brief moments that of a school, or more precisely the third form in a public school, composed of intelligent, obtuse and precocious boys, engrossed in their own jokes, defiant of authority, and oblivious of the outside world. Having a childish idea of humour, its more extravagant expressions of this mood appealed to me. They also usually happened late at night, even as late as four o'clock in the morning, when man's resistance is at its lowest. In the ordinary way there is by tradition no hierarchy in the House in terms of seniority, age, or office. But in this third-form mood the Speaker, or his Deputy, was translated into the master, and the occupants of the front benches served as prefects. It sometimes happened that Members enjoying a conversation or a drink, or both, in the smoking-room in the early hours of the morning would be asked by one of the Whips to go into the chamber to keep a debate running. John Foster was a past-master at this, and could talk brilliantly about nothing for as much time as the occasion required while observing the rules of order which demanded that the speaker must address himself to the subject under discussion. I was not practised and not gifted in this art, but I did once, when requested, address the Chair for five minutes on the subject of a full stop, a footling point of punctuation in the drafting of a clause to a Bill. The learned King's Counsel could have stretched this topic out for anything up to half an hour without technically filibustering, a practice which the United States Congress allows but which the Commons is careful to suppress. The point of order, which any Member could raise at any time, was an appeal to the Speaker, or the occupant of the Chair, asking for a ruling usually on whether a Member's words or conduct were in order, and points of order to the Chair often produced a chain reaction effect. The third form tried this out in the early hours one morning on Captain Beaumont, a Deputy

Speaker, who was occupying the Chair. Captain Beaumont was a quiet figure not easily roused, and on this occasion, with the lateness of the hour, he was clearly fighting back the claims of sleep. And so a Member from our benches, in addressing the Chair, deferentially upgraded him to Major, to be outbid a little later by a colleague upgrading him a step further to Colonel. Captain Beaumont cocked a drowsy eye at the speaker and the bidding stopped short of Brigadier. A little later still the Member for Nelson and Colne, detecting as he thought some irregularity in Tory conduct, raised a point of order which was dismissed on the grounds of being not so much a point of order as a 'red herring'. A Member then rose and prefaced his intervention with the unparliamentary phrase 'further to that red herring, Mr Deputy Speaker'. Captain Beaumont ruled that this phrase was unparliamentary, and his ruling was followed by another comment from the Conservative benches, delivered from a sitting position and not intended for the record, of 'further to that speaker Mr Deputy-Red-Herring'.

Sir Waldron Smithers, a likeable warrior who waged a private tug-of-war between the Bible and the bottle, relying on each to fortify his convictions, had a special technique of threatening death and damnation to the Socialist benches, which carried with it the inference that although he would like to despatch their occupants into the next world, he would always be pleased to greet them there. Willie Gallacher, one of the two authorized Communist deputies, whose broad Scots accent and excitable manner rendered his opening remarks no more coherent than the clucking of a cock-grouse disturbed in the heather, adopted the style of a man talking frenziedly to himself, occasionally turning in his place to address some remark to David Kirkwood whom he regarded as the other and complementary half of his act. I was once visited in the House by some serious-faced Communists from my constituency (who must have found themselves in East Surrey singularly isolated in their cause), who came to lodge some protest. They were mild-mannered people who believed Stalin to be the arch-angel of peace. Happily Willie Gallacher

came racing through the lobby shortly after they had arrived and I asked him to greet these constituents. At first the thought of meeting one of the only two real live Communist M.P.s flickered a light of understanding and transformed their disapproving features. Their mood, from being mildly reproachful of me, became reverential of him. But Gallacher immediately wrecked this by cutting one of his capers, slapping them on the back, poking me in the ribs and talking such Gaelic nonsense that not even they could recognize in him the disciple of holy, or unholy, writ.

Other Communists there were, disguised under the title of Socialists, whose quality was sinister and cynical and whose identities were early discovered, a grouping of small thorns in the flesh of honest men like Ernest Bevin, whose patriotic brand of Socialism they traduced.

Walter Fletcher, who represented a Lancashire constituency whose accents and manner he could render to perfection, was wit rather than clown, alive with the special kind of Jewish wit, sensitive to every inflection. His protuberant figure and shuffling gait and his pebble glasses gave him a deceptively myopic appearance. He had a nimble mind and, like many fat men, was light on his feet. Once, for my benefit, when we were walking through Westminster Hall, and when he thought no one else was looking, he performed an elegant little *cabriole*, the side-kicking step of a ballet dancer, like an elephantine Nijinksy wearing a black homburg and carrying a brief-case. His repertory of burlesque, which one evening extended to a little dance on the points of his toes wearing the Speaker's full-bottom wig—which we found resting on a stand while the Speaker was resting in his house—was judiciously reserved for a small private audience. He was friendly, clever, gifted, and humorous, and he had the ability to get things done. His family was called Fleishell and came from Hamburg, and he had been educated in England, at Uppingham.

Walter Fletcher was the type of Jew who could not decide whether to caricature some of his racial traits, or whether to become very English. He had limited talents as a painter but considerable artistic appreciation, despite the fact that the pictures on

the walls of his house—little masterpieces of the French post-impressionist school—were interspersed with examples of his own clumsier work. This never failed to lead to a conversation at cross-purposes whenever I dined with him. 'I like that picture particularly, Walter. Have you had it long?' I would ask, staring at a little painting by Vuillard of a lady emerging from a bath-tub. 'No. It is a good one. I did it last summer when I was in Holland,' my host would reply, looking at a painting of some barges.

Underneath his jolly façade Walter Fletcher nursed an ambition to make his reputation as a statesman. He had made a good deal of money in trade; and rumour had it that it was necessary to be up in the morning before the lark so as not to be outwitted by him in a business transaction. He assisted this rumour by telling jokes of how, in the war, while promoting the interests of the British Government with the help of a bribery account, he had invariably outwitted the Chinese. Perhaps he added fuel to the smouldering embers of suspicion by his imitation of a Jerusalem carpet dealer twisting the tail of a native moneylender in Hong Kong. His jokes were sophisticated and revealed a personal candour; but they ran away with him. He was convinced, and probably with good reason, that he would make an excellent President of the Board of Trade.

When, with a Tory majority, the post of President of the Board of Trade was filled, there subsequently fell vacant the junior post of Overseas Trade. This appeared to Walter, who was no longer young, as his last chance of being reassured that the Tory Party recognized him as someone it could trust. He wished, above all else, to be fully accepted and recognized by the Conservative Parliamentary Party, and to wield a little influence and apply his active mind to new tasks. By a combination of an unimaginative quality, which at that time was the hallmark of the Whip's office, and the lack of interest which the leader of the Party evidenced for the new men on the Conservative benches, his application was dismissed. Men with more conventional backgrounds looked like being a safer bet. In the circumstances Walter, despite his bulk, was an easy man to overlook. The vacancy, which might

have been his, was filled by a shouting brigadier, a cavalry officer of little intellectual distinction who, as Walter expressed it, 'knew nothing about overseas and still less about trade'. Walter was deeply disappointed. He became miserable and he went into a rapid decline. When I visited him in his home I found him shrunk and haggard. His deflation was tragic and complete. There were no more jokes, no more stories, only a note of bitterness in his voice. The compensation offered him was a knighthood. He accepted it, as he had accepted other gifts in his time, but it was no compensation for the damage done to his pride. A few weeks later he was dead.

A maiden speech is always an unnerving experience and mine unnerved me for several days before I gave it. Disraeli cut a sorry figure and broke down in tears when he made his. Christopher Hollis, on the other hand, as a new Member, refreshed the House with a display of wit and reason that few maidens can produce. Mine I only wished to get behind me so that I could belong to the club as a full speaking member, and I chose the unexciting subject, on an adjournment, of whether Church of England parsons should be allowed to teach in state schools. I was in favour of the idea. Some clergymen were good classical scholars and were not able to command much attention from their pulpits when they addressed themselves to theological subjects. It was a dull speech and all I can remember about it was that it was taking its uncertain course in an almost empty Chamber when Lord Winterton, as an act of friendship, and out of a nostalgic feeling of affection for my family (he had once proposed to one of my cousins) rounded on me from his seat on the front bench and said, 'Hear, Hear.' As he was sitting immediately in front of me this threw me off balance. So as not to lose the thread of my remarks I went back to the beginning of the sentence and repeated it all over again, which I thought at the time must have sounded like a struggling music-hall artist who believed that any applause called for an encore. I need not have worried. Apart from Lord Winterton and the Hansard reporter, no one was listening.

The Conservative Parliamentary Party was both led and dominated by Churchill: not by his reputation, nor by the uneasy conscience which affected those Conservatives who remembered how the Party had treated him in the thirties, nor by his personal popularity in the country, but by the man himself: by his intelligence, his courage and more than anything else by his humanity. Churchill, who was a man of gigantic proportions, never saw himself or presented himself as over life-size. This was one of the marks of his greatness. He was abundantly human: and anyone who is abundantly human is automatically vulnerable, and subject to pain, prejudice and hatred, as well as love, generosity and humour. And in Churchill's shadow, walking to his side but a few paces to his rear, went Eden, a man of altogether different mien and temperament. I did not know Eden personally, other than to meet him occasionally, to speak to him occasionally, and to listen to many of his speeches. He was more respected by the Labour Party than most of the Members on our benches. It was evident to all that he was conscientious, hard-working and dedicated to public life. It was clear, too, that he had talents and courage. He was the heir-presumptive to the Conservative Party and therefore, in time, to the Prime Minister's office. It was also clear to me, who only observed him, that the strength of Churchill was one of the factors which destroyed Eden. The period of waiting in the wings, waiting to act as the leader and co-ordinator of the Parliamentary Party—a function which Eden performed sporadically and well—was slowly but surely reducing his patience and his powers. The loyalty was too strong, the inner conflicts too great, and the period of waiting probably appeared to him interminable. It is impossible to judge Eden politically except in context to Churchill, and it is difficult to assess Eden out of the context of politics. Eden, who understood the House of Commons better than most of his predecessors in office, whose speeches were timed, calculated and often platitudinous, whose popularity in the country was equal, and in some ways comparable, to that of a film star who has caught the public imagination, will remain an enigma for some time to come. If in the course of

time his character emerges, I believe he will be found to be more interesting as a man than as a politician, although it was as a politician that he liked to be seen, and it was in politics that he judged his success and failure. Perhaps no one will ever know what was the image Eden had of himself. The only knowledge we may be left with is that whatever the image was, Eden loved it very much.

Hard on the heels of both, always distinguished by the quality and content of his speeches, was Macmillan, the intellectual heir to Churchill and measuring up to Churchill in the quality of robustness, without which public men, whatever their gifts or their ambitions, fade from the scene often at the very moment when the stage is set for them to make their long-awaited entry.

There is, I believe, a right time to enter Parliament, for those who intend to make politics their career. To enter too young, without a background other than an inherited one, straight from university, or, worse still, straight from the apprenticeship of the party machine—which in the case of a Conservative might be a Young Conservative party worker, and next a member of the Central Office staff—is to qualify ultimately for the position of party hack, of which there are gradings of good hack, bad hack, and something in between. To do this is to see life too early in political terms, to categorize the human race as Conservatives, Socialists, Liberals or as potentially any of these. The workings of the mind of the Tory who has never rebelled, who has never followed radical opinion, or seen people first and foremost as human beings and only incidentally as voters, is preconditioned, like processed food, calorific in content but duller than ditch-water to the taste. The same is just as true of his Socialist counterpart with this slight difference: that in cases where Socialism is born of rebellion rather than dogma, most men incline to become less rebellious as they grow older, so that they do at least move through and out of one phase of thinking. The juvenile professional may be a clever man, and may try to make up in research for what he has lacked in the wider experience of living, and he will almost certainly acquire an inordinate know-

ledge about bills, clauses and parliamentary history. But I wonder what his judgement is worth in a crisis, such as the crisis of Suez in 1956, once the issues at stake become more involved than the mere machinations of winning or losing an election. To enter Parliament too late can provide a pleasant evening to a man's life, if he feels he needs the excuse of having something to do or wishes to retain the habit of having somewhere to be. There are precedents in history to refute all this. William Pitt was Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four. Abraham Lincoln, on the other hand, only became a Congressman when he was nearing forty. But they lived in other ages, the ages of the amateur and the dilettante, when a man could follow a number of pursuits and become proficient at two or three divergent subjects, when his ability and integrity counted for more than the statable qualifications of his apprenticeship. The right time for a man to enter Parliament in order to make the fullest use of his life and at the same time to make the most effective use of politics as an instrument of power to achieve certain ends cannot be gauged in terms of his age. The right moment arrives when he has come to terms with the cut and thrust of life, irrespective of political tides: when he can see that politics, vitally important as it is, is only the overlay, the veneer to people's lives and does not constitute the stuff of life itself. By the time he has discovered this, of course, it may take a little prodding to get him started in the direction of Westminster. I suppose in my case, if I could have used Parliament in a more nineteenth-century manner, and expanded my life in other ways, and paid scant attention to the whims of my constituents, and been guided solely by my conscience and my sense of moment and such parliamentary knowledge as one inevitably acquires, I would have stayed.

At the end of July 1949 Parliament, after wrestling with the Finance Bill, the Lords' Amendments to the Wireless and Telegraph Bill, the Coal Industry Bill, the London dock strike, the economic situation and several other matters as well, rose for its summer recess. Control exchange regulations were still in force and the amount of money which one man could take abroad

with him was limited to £50. This restricted foreign travel and many people who would have liked to escape were forced to take their holidays at home. At the end of August my wife and I set off in a car through France, driving, stopping, eating, sleeping, sleep induced by the heat of the sun and thick red wine, until we reached Provence, not far from St Remy where Van Gogh was taken when he was mad, and where he painted his visionary pictures of cyprus trees and swirling skies orbiting around a multitude of suns. Here we stayed with some friends at a small farmhouse. Little by little, with the laziness of the life and the sense of timelessness induced, an earlier form of energy built up inside me and I began, tentatively at first but then more vigorously as I became totally absorbed, to work at my painting. As I became absorbed in the world of values which was concerned with the relationships of form and colour, and the biting harmonies which the mind could detect and distil from the most commonplace objects in nature, politics and constituents became mere dots on the horizon.

Down the hill from the farm was the village where, in the evenings, the country people seemed permanently in holiday mood, breathing wine, garlic and good will at each other across the tables in the bistro. And up the hill one day, puffing and pushing his bicycle, came the postman, as it seemed on some special errand. 'Bonjour, facteur.' 'Bonjour, monsieur,' said the postman, and handed me a telegram. It was from the Whip's Office, telling me that Stafford Cripps had devalued the pound, that Parliament was being recalled on Tuesday, 27 September, and that I must be in my place to vote against the Government on Thursday, 29 September. That gave me another eight days of holiday before returning to London. Later the same day the postman arrived again, this time with a telegram from my constituency association asking me to return to London by Monday, 26 September. To this piece of impertinence I replied that I would return to vote on Thursday, 29. The following day the postman once again turned up with a further injunction from my chairman urging me to return to London forthwith. I could just picture

him, cooped up in London, viewing life from the obverse end of a political telescope, a life in which hierarchy centred at Westminster, the source, after all, of patronage. My answer, which I handed to the postman, written in block letters on the back of a drawing pad so that the girl at the telephone exchange could easily understand it, contained, I thought, the right ingredients of firmness and whimsy. 'Will be returning Thursday 29. You must take me as you find me. If you can find me. Astor.' All I could say later was that the telegram had seemed a good idea at the time.

The time of the next general election was looming, and still I postponed my decision, whether to continue in politics and make a career (because I did not fancy the idea of being permanently on the back benches, one of the many Members who are forced to make their speeches after most of the arguments have been stated by earlier debaters, men who lend support but whose influence is seldom felt in the direction of affairs), or whether to contract out, to enjoy a more private life and try to do something more creative than politics. Too much of my life had been a headlong rush in several directions, interspersed with periods of disillusionment. I needed a little time without interruption, without any compulsion to think or act in a particular way, in order to reassess some of my ideas, and to do this before I grew much older.

During the 1950 general election my father had asked my brothers, Bill and Jakie, and me, who were all standing as candidates, if we would each give my mother one big meeting in our constituencies. He made the point that it would comfort her to feel that she was helping her sons and at the same time give her the satisfaction of playing some part in the battle about which she felt so strongly. Also, with a certain sense of generalship, he probably felt that a few diversionary attacks on the flanks would relieve the pressure on his own front. He was at the time held responsible by her not only for her being out of politics but also for the neutralist policy which *The Observer* was adopting towards the struggle. Only once before had my mother appeared on my platform, and that was at a political lunch in London, after I had been

four years in the House of Commons. It was a luncheon of Surrey Members of Parliament and their supporters, and on that occasion I was billed to speak first, and she to act as the supporting cast. It seemed improbable that it would turn out this way. After my speech I resumed my seat amid the ripple of applause that is deemed only polite on these occasions. When all was quiet, my mother turned to me and said, in an aside which carried to the far end of the room: 'Where did you learn to do this? I feel like Balaam when the ass spoke.' She then got to her feet and talked about a number of things that bore no relation to anything I had said. Her speech was a great success. That had been my only experience of speaking with her in public.

When my father appealed to us we rallied like soldiers. I told my agent to book the largest hall in the constituency and I awaited the moment with mixed feelings of curiosity and apprehension. On the Sunday preceding the official start of the general election campaign all three candidates were invited to attend a church service which purported to give an added air of respectability to the cat and dog fight that was about to ensue. I stayed away. The parson, of low-church inclination, prayed on these occasions for all candidates in turn, if not by name at least by inference. Had his prayers been vouchsafed the result would, presumably, have been a dead heat for the three of us. Immediately after this the Liberals played their one and only card. They appealed through the Press to all three candidates to declare that they would indulge in no personal vituperation of any sort, a practice they were slow to follow themselves, and one which, in any case, would have deprived the electorate of most of the fun of the fair. In an election campaign an experienced politician usually never mentions his opponent by name. The Liberal suggestion was sanctimonious, but I fell in with it. In this case I might have honoured my pledge had not the Labour candidate thought up an oblique way round the situation which left me momentarily forgetful of our earlier arrangement. He solved the problem in his case by inviting a neighbouring Socialist Member to come and air his personal grievances against me. These appeared in the main to hinge on the fact that in the

last Parliament I had cast surprisingly few votes against his party who were in power. The speaker had been personal in the extreme and I was told about it when I arrived to hold a meeting in the same hall the following night. The visiting Member in question had lop ears and a goatee beard, and was closely associated with the Communist fellow-travellers in the Parliamentary Labour Party, whom I regarded as traitors. My opening remarks were: 'I understand that Mr ——, who is about as observant in politics as the goat which he so closely resembles, was tethered to this platform last night.' It was the word 'tethered' that rankled. The local papers next day reported that I had called one of my opponents a goat: the Liberal and Labour candidates pretended to be deeply offended: and my mother was due to arrive shortly and relieve herself of some of the pent-up emotion she had been storing for years. If I did not look out my majority would be only large rather than overwhelming.

I went round to my mother's house in Hill Street to suggest to her that restraint should be the order of the day. It would be an understatement to say that she was looking forward to the moment of her speech more than I was.

My mother's greeting, whenever I visited her, was usually both welcoming and admonitory. She could seldom conceal her pleasure at meeting, we invariably laughed together, and at the same time she could not fully register the fact that I had, over the years, departed almost completely from her way of thinking. She still regarded my 'defection' as a temporary lapse from grace, a falling away from faith which should, she felt, lead to remorse. All the members of her household, secretaries and servants as well as those of her relations who were still regularly in attendance, came completely under her spell. She worked on them a strange enchantment, both fortifying their lives and at the same time disqualifying them, in some mysterious way, from living life fully in any other context. On this occasion, with a look of defiance rather than reproach, she asked me what it was that I wanted her to talk about in her speech. The choice, as I saw it, was hers, not mine.

'The women of England,' she started, placing in her mouth a small piece of chewing-gum which she could retain by the hour without any conscious movement of her jaws, 'need rousing. I know just how to handle an audience, and I know how to rouse women.' Speaking as a married man I could not immediately concede that the women needed rousing.

'Well then, I'll talk about the humbug of the Labour Party. I *know* the Labour Party. They preach brotherly love on the platform but they're really ruled by envy. They squeal like pigs, too, when I tell 'em this but they know it's true.' This seemed a promising subject, but I asked her, whatever else she did, to omit all reference to me. Our conversation immediately took a different turn.

'I like your cheek. I'll say what I please.' She was standing in front of the fireplace, her hands below her hips holding up the back of her skirt, a habit practised by her and my aunts which enabled them, unobtrusively, to warm what they always referred to as their 'sit-upons' while making general conversation. She stepped forward and shook a finger in my direction, addressing me as if I were the audience at her meeting: 'You've given me a good idea. I'm going to make my speech about *you*. I'll pay you out, Michael, I'll tell the meeting that politics bore you stiff, and that all you really like is painting. I'll tell them you're just a Lothario, an artist, and not a very good husband; and that you make fun of them all behind their backs and that they shouldn't vote for you. How would you like that?' And then, in the tones of a Virginian Negro, she went on: 'I'll tell 'em you don't know nothin'. I'll tell 'em you're crazy. I'll tell 'em I got a son who's crazy. That ought to rouse them if nothing else will. Or,' she added, holding her head very erect, looking down her nose and assuming a haughty English accent, 'I might tell them how *privileged* they are to have the opportunity of voting for my distinguished son, how *privileged* they are to be addressed by his distinguished mother. That wouldn't rouse them; that would put 'em to sleep.' She finished in her normal tone of voice: 'Now get on with you. I must work on this. Oh dear, oh dear, I never

knew that I could ever miss anything as much as the House of Commons.'

I was then intermittently keeping a diary and I wrote the following record of the meeting: 'My mother spoke for me this afternoon. The meeting was held in the hall in Purley. It had been well advertised and there was the largest crowd I have yet seen in the constituency: the overflow hall was full and there were several hundred people outside in the street listening to the speech relayed by amplifiers. She arrived sitting in the back of a car reading, not her notes, but the ninety-first Psalm. She has suddenly during this election discovered Economics, and it was a relief, in a way, to find her with the Bible in her lap and not a sheet of figures. On the telephone in the morning she had gone over what she intended to say, and started reciting figures, apparently careless of whether they referred to percentages, thousands, the total figure of houses repaired since the war, or the number of present-day unemployed. How she loathed accountancy in her hey-day. How gallant to attempt it now in her old age. When she arrived she was surprisingly nervous, and told me she had prayed a lot about her speech. She was more demure than usual; and I was moved to see how proud she was to be appearing on my platform and how anxious she was to do well for my sake. Her speech turned out to be a *tour de force*, most of it improvised once she got into her stride. At the start a youth of about eighteen heckled and shouted at her. She dealt with him admirably, treated him like a child, and told him he must first learn manners and then would be the time for him to find out about politics. And she added: "Young man, don't you dare be impertinent . . .": then, looking him straight in the eye, she gave him a smile almost of recognition, "He's only a boy," and shaking her finger she finished with "Now just you shut *up*." Which he did.

'It was enjoyable at Purley of all places—this respectable community full of local intrigues and jealousies—to hear her ramming home the point that Our Lord preferred a harlot, any day, to a hypocrite. And being applauded for it. She seemed to scratch beneath the surface. She treated this audience in the same way as

she used to treat the wives of fishermen on the Barbican: taunting, laughing, scolding, giving them the benefit of the doubt, and giving it to them straight from the shoulder. It is a generous and bold way of speaking and the householders of Purley did not resent it. They cheered and called for more.

'Her bit about the age of the common man is excellent. It's pure reflex action but unanswerable. "I'm sick and tired of hearing about the common man. I like the *uncommon* man. It's the uncommon man who has been responsible for every step forward this country has taken." That is the theme. "The Socialists believe in equality: the man who starts from scratch and gets to the top they now tell us is a public danger. I suppose they want the man who starts from scratch and just keeps on scratching."

'She drove a wedge into the Liberal vote. She attacked their misplaced sense of responsibility in this election. There were a good many Liberals in the audience. She first seduced them, then scolded them, and then told them to cheer up. "Because thou art neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth. That comes out of the Book of Revelation, and if you don't know your Bible it's time you started reading it." In attacking the Liberals she paid tribute to the achievements of their Party in the past, and handled this like a veteran of many campaigns.

'Some of her rather platitudinous remarks sound better than they read because she gives to them a personal inflexion. Her stories of the early days in the House, her friendship with the pioneers of the Labour movement, her comments on some of their present-day successors, were uncompromising and witty and not uncharitable—but so much depends on her natural, quick and friendly manner that I find it difficult to express in writing the electric effect she had on her audience.

'From High Wycombe, where she was speaking for Bill, I hear she was interrupted in the middle of something she was saying by an old man who shouted "When your party was in power I was in the workhouse," to which she answered, "And I wish to heavens you were there now." '

The second general election was marred for me by one unfor-

tunate incident just before the campaign started. A few of my Young Conservatives created an uproar at my adoption meeting in which they shouted at the platform and the rest of the audience shouted back at them. Their complaint appeared to be about my division record, which is the record of the number of votes cast by Members in any particular Parliament. The division record can be seen as an attendance record, though it does not represent attention to the work of the House of Commons any more than attendance at school represents the educative progression of the schoolboy. I had never pandered to my Young Conservatives' notion that the future of the country lay exclusively in the hands of the young people. I used to suggest to them that the future lay with everyone. Perhaps I could never properly conceal my lack of interest in the political views of teen-agers. Perhaps I could not conceal my mild antipathy to all teen-agers, particularly Conservative-minded ones. I believed that young people needed to be a bit rebellious. On this occasion they were.

When they complained that I had not voted often enough in Parliament, the idea of being judged by them on an attendance record was galling. If they stuck to statistics they had a cast-iron case; and it was not easy, in front of a yapping crowd, to explain convincingly that statistics do not always carry much meaning. I replied that if I accepted the division record as a criterion of merit then I and half the members of the Conservative Party could claim a better political record than Mr Churchill's. Could anything, I added, be sillier than that? This answer proved unwise; and it did not silence them. There was something fishy about the whole business. The protest did not seem genuine; it had from the start a quality that was contrived. A reporter from the local paper left the hall in a hurry. The gentleman with political ambitions of his own, who, I later learned, had engineered this affair, remained impassively in his seat. He congratulated me cordially at the end of the evening.

At eight o'clock next morning I knew the worst. Two daily papers had reported my speech as a sneaking attack on the leader of my party; an attack on Churchill whom I saw as the one great

man in public life. With his customary generosity he saw that my embarrassment was greater than his. In his reply to my letter of regret at having involved his name in this way he showed a humour that surpassed the more literal comment expressed by those of his supporters who forwarded their opinions on to me. In the House of Commons he had always been kind and forbearing in our occasional conversations, and I think that this was because he knew I would not compulsively talk politics at him or try to impress him with my earnestness. He had a dread of being bored, and although this was a small point of contact it was nevertheless one that flickered with moments of recognition. I listened, I seldom talked, and he would usually discuss any subject under the sun except the subject under discussion in the chamber. He threw his mind, apparently without effort, backwards into history, obliquely into the arts, living with it as if for a few moments he had transferred his centre of gravity into a different world as seen through an unusually wide-angled lens. When, on these occasions, some aspirant of my vintage attempted to bring the conversation round to Party affairs, he would usually pretend to be a little deaf. Even when he became a little deaf he used his deafness as a weapon of defence. His habit of forgetting people's names was endearing too. Tousled, elderly Party faithfuls, who thought they had known him all their lives, whose manner sometimes slyly conveyed this to their constituents, remained in his mind as anonymous beings. It seemed as if, on the social level at least, he was not prepared to swallow anything that had not the tang that registered on his palate.

Jakie had also read the newspaper account of the fracas at my adoption meeting. He sent me a message which put the matter in a nutshell. 'Now that you have fought your own Association to a standstill, the rest of your campaign should be easy.'

In 1951, before the next general election, I resigned my seat. I was not happy as a Party politician. In my heart of hearts I liked the notion of government reduced to a minimum, protruding itself only so as to protect the rights of the individual. This was an ideal, an idea to be projected occasionally into people's minds.

It could not claim a share of any recognized political platform. A gentle hint from one of my colleagues, who later found his way into the Cabinet, told me that if he were given office after the election he would like me as his Parliamentary Private Secretary. It was tempting, the prospect of becoming properly committed, of working from within, not always to be looking at events from the outside. I am glad I resisted. Later, at the time of Suez, I would certainly have resigned. I did not enjoy the game of politics enough to play it convincingly. I needed, above all, to discover a little more about the source and impulse of ideas before attempting to suggest to other people which way they should think.

Increasingly I had come to view Parliament as the channel, or bottleneck, through which ideas either were, or were not, translated into law; and decreasingly as the place where ideas were initiated. The important element in society remained the individual, idiosyncratic, often unpredictable, who could not be circumscribed by law or regulation. There was no room in the House of Commons for an independent; and to have declared myself a Conservative, with mildly anarchistic tendencies, who believed that the individual was more important than the authority controlling him, would have been to invent a formula which not even my Party, despite the latitude it allowed its members, could have supported.

While not taking kindly to the politician's role I, too, had loved the House of Commons. I enjoyed the humour, and the way Parliament coped with changing situations and different kinds of people. Like some guardian of an old tradition she offered her Members, those who did not carry off the top prizes, a selection of gifts. To those whose ambitions were flagging or frustrated she presented herself as a club, an old-established and unique form of club whose members were accorded a number of small but useful privileges. To others who were wise enough to appreciate the practical and subtle side of her nature she offered a life which allowed them a good deal of time in which to pursue their

private interests. She allowed them to participate actively in as much or as little political work as they pleased. Few people outside of Parliament were in a position to know what their duties amounted to. Some Members used these gifts wisely and showed their gratitude to her all their lives. But for those who accepted them but disregarded their quality, who treated Parliament not like a lover or mistress but like a form of private or public convenience, she reserved a special forfeit. The Mother of Parliaments liked to be taken seriously, and when roused she could wreak a subtle form of revenge. Those Members who played fast and loose with her she provided with an audience, and a claque: she coaxed them forward with the lure of publicity: she offered them every kind of false inducement. She encouraged them at each step to accept their public image as a part of their true identity. Sometimes, whimsically, she turned them into Knights or Peers or, if she felt particularly malicious, into Television Personalities. She goaded them and haunted them by refusing to take them seriously.

During the comparatively short period of five years that I had been in the House of Commons, although the legislation was dictated by a Socialist majority, Parliament had remained an essentially Conservative institution, discreetly reminding members that Britain's political genius lay in the direction of pragmatism, compromise, and in accepting an evolutionary approach to social problems. The Labour Party outside Parliament had not always accepted this notion kindly. It had remained jealous of its own interpretation of democracy. In Parliament it elected its leaders by popular ballot: it looked outside Parliament, to the Trades Union Congress and to the Annual Party Conference, to confirm its attitude towards policy: and in moments of irritation it liked to call the Tories, who took this particular interpretation of democracy less seriously, autocrats, or, even more petulantly, Fascists. Socialism, handing over more and more power to the

state and attaching less and less importance to individual or private enterprises, appeared to be in conflict with a good deal of Parliamentary tradition, which indicated that Parliament was not only the sole instrument for enacting legislation but was also a final chamber of appeal, safeguarding the rights of individuals. There were inevitably Tories to whom the rights of individuals had no very defined meaning: and there were Socialists who were congenitally incapable of riding roughshod over other people's opinion. Stafford Cripps, despite his fanatical streak, had been one of these.

Stafford Cripps had died prematurely and not, it seemed to me, intrinsically from causes of disease or overwork. Unlike Walter Fletcher he had not been crushed by the sheer weight of disappointment. He had, in some mysterious way, died because his allegiance to life had become divided. He had found himself in an equivocal position in relation to himself, living, as I thought, out of context of his own true centre, finding himself in a position from which he could see no escape due to the attitude in public life to which he was committed. My judgement at this point appeared controversial, even in my own mind, and my assumptions could be at best only speculative.

Stafford Cripps' death made me think of Jan Masaryk, the son of Thomas Masaryk, the founder and first President of the Czechoslovakian Republic. During the war, in which his country was subjugated, first by Germany and later by the Soviet Union, he had formed part of his country's Provisional Government in exile in London. He was a patriot who believed fervently in a democratic Czechoslovakia. During the closing phases of the war he had visited Stalin in Moscow. His fervour and sense of mission were such that when the war ended he staked his reputation on effecting some kind of compromise, compatible with his ideals of democracy, with the Soviets who were in the process of turning his country into a Communist satellite. He believed so fervently in his dream of a free, independent Czechoslovakia that he could not totally accept that his country would not find its way to freedom. When he returned to his country he became its

representative at the United Nations. In March 1948 Jan Masaryk fell from a window in Prague into the street and was killed. It remained obscure whether he had been assassinated or whether he had committed suicide. What, at any rate, appeared reasonably certain was that Jan Masaryk realized not only that his cause was hopeless but that his ardour had allowed him to adopt a political position that was fundamentally misleading. By trying to come to terms with Stalin he had, in one sense, misled his followers. He was an honourable and a courageous man who was also a political symbol; and he could no longer disassociate his standards of personal integrity with the equivocal political situation in which he was placed. In this situation the rights and wrongs of his position as an individual became obscured: they no longer counted. Whether he was thrown out of the window, or whether he threw himself, he could see no possible point in continuing to live. His position appeared, in every sense, hopeless.

I used to see quite a lot of Cripps in the House of Commons, but mostly across the floor of the chamber. Occasionally, abandoning the smoking room, I would find him in the cafeteria, nibbling a biscuit and drinking a cup of tea. We had one or two friends in common outside Parliament, and I found talking to Cripps, who had such a reputation for austerity, refreshing. Feelings of affection and respect can only be stated. He was a friend of my godfather, Philip Lothian, and like me he regretted that Philip had adopted the religion of Christian Science which attempted to deal in sweeping facile terms with matters of infinite complexity and mystery. Like Philip Lothian he appeared to be a man who needed to tabulate life, to make it fit into some recognizable pattern. As a conversationalist he was exactly opposite in manner to the ebullient, convivial and more outrageous Aneurin Bevan. Bevan numbered a great many devoted personal friends in the Labour Party who loved his extravagance and the range of his imagination. Stafford Cripps appeared to have few personal friends. He was a crank, and a vegetarian, an ascetic who towered above the heads of any of the cranks I had ever met. He used to visit a lady therapist who purported to diagnose his physical condition by

staring into the whites of his eyes, and who usually ordered him to give up his few remaining minor pleasures, such as taking a cup of coffee or smoking an occasional cigar.

Churchill, who respected Stafford Cripps but in his robust way could not help ridiculing his crankishness, had once referred to him from the platform, at a Conservative Party Conference, irreverently, as 'Sir Stifford Crapps'. The joke was not original but it appealed to Churchill and the spoonerism was accompanied by a piece of ham acting that was supposed to indicate that the speaker had made a genuine slip of the tongue, one that was also intended to deceive nobody. Churchill's small-boy, urchin humour was not only one of his most endearing traits, it was also an indication that he had never entirely lost an essential childlike element in his nature: that, despite the responsibilities he carried, his flame of life would not easily be quenched. Stafford Cripps was brilliant, as his record at the Bar alone indicated, but he was also humourless and, for a man of his formidable intellectual powers, a little naïve about people.

Stafford Cripps owed his position in the Socialist Party to his intellectual ability, his reputation for integrity, and his capacity for work. He was a politician who despised political intrigue. He believed in the essentially noble qualities in human nature. The Socialist Party, unused to governing, was also unversed in the refinements of intrigue, and at moments appeared to concentrate on little else. Its members intrigued desperately and blatantly, forming groups and counter-groups, observing few recognized codes of loyalty. Cripps, looking disapprovingly like an eagle-owl behind his spectacles, had stood, imperiously, aside from all this: Attlee had developed a technique of appearing to ignore it: Ernest Bevin, less patient, had muttered his threats and concentrated on his task as Foreign Secretary. Cripps, initially at any rate, had believed that Socialist planning was an enlightened process which would rely, ultimately, on the co-operation of the whole community. To his regret, in the course of the 1945 Labour Government's tenure of office, he had discovered that the community had an inborn resistance to Socialist planning. The

Communist Party used threats and violence and trained their spokesmen in the art of double-talk and deceit. To them the end appeared to justify the means. Cripps hated all forms of deceit. He believed in reasonableness and respect for law. For thirty years he had identified himself with Socialism, and increasingly he came to doubt whether Socialism provided the answers to men's problems. His position within his own party, and in Parliament, had become increasingly isolated.

In 1949, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Cripps had reluctantly come to the conclusion that Britain had to devalue her currency. He had, in the national interests, resisted this measure for as long as possible. Emphatically he had stated to the House of Commons, and therefore to the world, that he would not devalue sterling. Unhelpful questions, tactlessly phrased, compelled him to reiterate his statement. He found himself making, calculatedly, unequivocal denials about devaluating sterling up to the moment when he was compelled to devaluate it. Anyone with a less stern sense of personal honour could have found an excuse for himself under the circumstances. Cripps was a man with a following in the country. He had a greater intellectual range, a more penetrating curiosity, and a more uncompromising quality than Attlee. He could not reconcile himself to propping up the Labour Party by a series of manœuvres. He had committed himself fully to a form of Christian Socialism based on a notion of high-minded, unselfish behaviour. He had reluctantly discovered that human nature does not alter much, that the laws it observes are evolutionary laws that will not respond to exhortation, that it was impossible, even within the confines of the Cabinet, to translate his high ideals into practical behaviour. Once he saw this he also realized that he had not quite so much to live for.

In 1950 Stafford Cripps went to a sanatorium in Switzerland where he lingered and died of a condition attributed to spinal tubercular infection. He had, by then, found himself out on a limb, unaligned either to himself or to his party, and the flame of life within him could find nothing on which to feed. He had dedicated himself to serving the community, and in his straight-

forward and high-minded way he had enhanced the scene of public life. If the cause of his dilemma and his eclipse could be comprehended his life, so it seemed to me, would have achieved an even greater purpose.

13

Echoes

In 1952 my father died. During the last two years of his life he had a stroke, and with his health failing he retired to Cliveden. Having a weak heart he transferred his bedroom to a ground-floor room in a wing of the house so as not to have to walk upstairs. He refused any more to listen to the cackle of controversy. Towards the end, unable to move about except in a wheeled chair, his mind reverted to his earlier interests; to his horses, to forestry, and the business of running his estate. The sternness which as a child I had found disconcerting had evaporated. Instead, his innate gentleness and his consideration for other people made him a delightful man to meet. He enjoyed a short Indian summer in the evening of his life, a life which, although packed with engagements, he had never fully lived.

Most of my father's life had been a struggle of one sort or another, predominantly a struggle to promote a classical as opposed to a more haphazard and romantic way of life. He had attempted, and in some measure succeeded, in doing this in a more enterprising way than merely following the patterns or convention. In politics he was more Radical than Conservative, yet in his public life he had sought to find a solution to problems by orderly constitutional means. In his work, concerned with public health, on committees such as the Departmental Commission on Tuberculosis, the Medical Research Committee of the League of Nations, and as Chairman of the Institute of International Affairs he operated to a method of 'logical' progression. At Plymouth, during his second term of office as Lord Mayor, during the German air-raids which practically destroyed the city, he had worked night and day to maintain the city's essential services. Later he had set about preparing the plan for rebuilding

Plymouth on new and improved lines. The work appealed to his sense of order: it was one of the straightforward constructive processes in life. His racing stable, which he had gradually built up from nothing, had become one of the best in the world, a model of efficiency of its kind. At home, where his was the voice of authority, he never deviated from what he believed to be just. Somewhat rigidly he had tried to establish a classical form in a household made up of widely different component parts. My mother, at heart a romantic, could not be contained within the bounds of classical form. She provided an element of adventure and uncertainty which his life needed.

Towards the end of the war my father judged that my mother's performance in Parliament had lost its initial purpose. Many of the aims she had fostered, mostly concerned with women's rights, had already been achieved. She appeared to be becoming increasingly personal and destructive and it pained him to see her, whom he loved, ridiculed by lesser people who had never sampled her true quality. And so, much against her will, he made her retire from public life; and for the first time in their lives they fell out with each other. He was convinced that he was doing right; and so he was, according to his orderly and logical view of life. She felt outraged at being openly defeated. His tenacity and forbearance in the face of all her tirades was heroic. He never lost sight of the qualities in her which he loved. With his family dispersed and divided, with his strength diminishing, with his back really to the wall his rearguard action was masterly. I admired his tenacity and the way he never complained. But at the same time it was sad because the sense of order and restrictions which had governed his life could not properly take into account my mother's essentially human foibles. Her public proclamations, her militant postures, were forever in her life contradicted by her irresistible human touch. Her love and recognition of people was the special gift she had to make which she bestowed on quite unsuspecting people who, at one moment, met her as strangers, and at the next discovered they had found a new sort of friend. This was the gift that had so enhanced my father's life.

Retirement and old age brought to my father their own sense of relief, the flickerings of a second childhood in which he could commune nearer to nature, released from the world of politics and from planning the conduct of other people's lives. He no longer felt compelled to act as the leader of his family. He came to see that his family could have no leader. It was no longer a pack. In this mood he showed a sympathy with those of his children who, at some point, had challenged his decrees, and a certain lack of concern for those of his relatives who, in order to please him, had appeared outwardly to comply with his wishes. He responded to what I believe to be the natural law: that the son must at some point challenge the father on level terms if he is to assert his manhood, if he is not to be crushed and carry inside of him a sense of injury, the bitter reflections of his own inability to stand on his own feet. 'Do you never consider what father would do?' How extraordinary those words sounded from twenty years ago. I preferred, in those early days, to think what father might have done had he really been given his head. Had he allowed himself to experiment up the side streams of life, those tributaries which add their songs to the main stream, he might have seen people in a different light. He was such a good and trusting man that people who met him wanted to know him better. He was not easy to get to know, and he had no small talk of any kind. His modesty and uprightness conveyed their own meaning and men, after meeting him, often came away feeling reassured, because his own qualities of integrity and decency were ones he sought to establish in others.

The river of my family was only one of the two rivers issuing from the same parental lake. My cousins, brought up at Hever, not chastised by the same turbulent flood, lived as I might have lived, and as at moments in my childhood I almost wished I had lived, following and discovering their courses on more predictable lines. The notion of this disturbed my mother. How could the Astors, who were so obtuse at understanding people, learn about life without the dynamic quality of her drive? This was a notion which I think she would have applied to any family into which

she might have married. She fostered this illusion with astonishing energy and tried to apply it to all the men in her life, to husbands, sons, admirers and friends. Obliquely, and in a limited sense, the limits of which she had never accepted, she was right. When she came to Cliveden, and when she came to know my grandfather, she saw that his family had reached an impasse. Its members were aloof and desperately shy. Like a bundle of heavy logs that had become jammed in a river they needed some propellant to set them moving with the current. Here she acted like an explosive force: illuminating, disrupting, opening up new and exciting avenues into life, and certain retreats from life as well. Her methods were sometimes inspired, and sometimes extreme; but they were impelled by a desire to give, to share with others her personal vision of life.

In intimate matters, where my mother's imagination needed play, she turned back to her Langhorne relations who shared something of her touch, to her sister Phyllis while she was alive, to her nieces, to the relations who did not have what the Langhornes regarded as the Astors' stubborn taint. I came to respect the memory of old John Jacob, the first of the line, unpolished and limited though he was; not because of the fortune he made, although that had helped me in its time, but because of a certain earthiness I detected in his character, and for his practical sense and his determination not to accept defeat. I liked, too, the picture of grandfather Langhorne, because he liked taking a chance and he knew how to have a good time.

There was at Cliveden a family ghost which, for all I know, may walk today. The ghost was a dynastic image that implied that the Astors, moving north and east across Europe from Spain, had, as the landlords of New York, become a family immune to the ordinary problems of life, aloof, high-minded, gifted, a little misunderstood, a two-dimensional spectre that had no reality in the world of flesh and of men. Or was it my grandfather's Sacred Cow, pastured in the bend of the Thames, claiming for itself a special immunity, special privileges, for reasons that are quite obscure, related to certain antiquated rites? It symbolized an

idolatry which my father, my uncle and my aunt Pauline hoped in their lives to defeat. If it is a ghost that once upon a time haunted my imagination, in my own life it is exorcised. If it was a Sacred Cow, then it is better dead.

Such was the kaleidoscopic pattern of my family background. Looking back I am not surprised that I rebelled. That was inevitable, although I did not relish the process. There was so much that I found good and that I liked; a lot that was foolish that I had come to dislike; some that was neither good nor bad but just human which I loved, elements that can be detected in most of us, elements that I came to discover were also a part of me. And yet the harsh Puritan view was not a part of my heritage. It was a cloak that I was asked to assume. I could either try to make it fit, or throw it off; and I decided, when I was quite young, that I could never make it fit. Young men when they revolt denounce the attitudes of their parents, or their faith, or whatever it is they find oppressive; but the attitudes live with them still. Revolt is the first step, and the young men's vociferous renunciations show that these attitudes, sometimes turned inside out, are still a part of their lives. If later, as their inner lives begin to grow, they come to see that what they dislike is only the veneer—the postures in living—rather than the true expressions of life, then at last they begin to live. The cloak of inherited attitudes falls away, and they can respect the memory of their forebears without experiencing any need either childishly to venerate their personalities or pathetically to imitate their performances. Then they find they are no longer angry. And they are no longer young men.

Index

Index

Acheson, Dean, 162
Alington, Dr C. A., Head Master of Eton, 98
Astor, John Jacob (1763–1848), 9–11, 219
Astor, William Waldorf (1848–1919), 1st Viscount, 8, 9, 12–21, 36
Astor, Waldorf, 2nd Viscount, 18–20, 40–50, 118–20, *Chapter IX*, 216–218
Astor, 'Bill', 3rd Viscount, 78, 97, 122–3
Astor, David, 71, 72, 87, 95, 123, 147
Astor, 'Jakie', 75, 77, 97, 123–4, 130, 155
Astor, Barbara, *nee* McNeill (afterwards Viscountess Ward), 154–155, 180–1
Astor, Nancy, Viscountess, M.P., 27–8, 31–5, 38–42, 50–9, 61–3, 68–9, 75–7, 92, 117–18, 125–6, 203–6, 217–19
Astor of Hever, Lord, 43
  Chairman of *The Times*, 136, 145–6
Attlee, Rt Hon. Earl, 189, 213–14

Balfour, Rt Hon. Earl, 69
Banbury of Southam, Lord, 151
Barrington-Ward, Robert, Editor of *The Times*, 137, 145–7
Beaumont, Capt. H., M.P., 192, 193
Bevan, Rt Hon. Aneurin, M.P., 190, 212
Bird, Edward, 108, 109
Braddock, Mrs Bessie, M.P., 187, 188
Brand, Lord, 28, 29, 47, 70, 138, 140
Brand, Phyllis, 28, 30
Brooks (Brookie), 65–7
Bushell, Arthur, 74, 75

Christian Science, 50–9, 97–8, 143–4
Churchill, Rt Hon. Sir Winston, 136, 189, 190, 197, 207, 208, 213
Cockburn, Claud, 136
Coningham, Air Marshal Sir Arthur, 157, 158
Conservative Central Office, 175
Corrette Marcel, 163–5
Cripps, Rt Hon. Sir Stafford, 190, 211–15
Cunard, Victor (quoted), 39–42
Curtis, Lionel, 69, 79, 84, 108, 138, 140, 141
Cust, Henry, M.P., 17

Dalton, Rt Hon. Hugh, M.P. (afterwards Lord), 191
Darling, Sir Will Y., M.P., 188, 189
Dawson of Penn, Viscount, 141, 142
Dawson, Geoffrey, Editor of *The Times*, 79
  see Cliveden Set, 136–47

Eden, Rt Hon. Sir Anthony, M.P. (afterwards Earl of Avon), 138, 162, 190, 197–8
Elliot, Rt Hon. Walter, M.P., 79, 138
Elliott, Sir Claude, Head Master of Eton, and afterwards Provost, 98
Eton College, 92–101

Fenner, George, 71
Fitzmaurice, Lord Charles (afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne) 148–9
Fletcher, Sir Walter, M.P., 189, 194–196
Flynn, Maurice B., 29
Flynn, Norah, 29, 32, 85–6

Foster, John, Q.C., M.P., 192
Four Hundred, The American, 12

Gallacher, Willie, M.P., 193, 194
Garvin, J. L., Editor of *The Observer*, 69, 79, 137
Gibbons, Nannie, 49, 67, 68
Gibson, Charles Dana, 7, 26, 27
Gibson, Irene, 26, 27, 33
Gosse, Sir Edmund, 58, 59
Grenfell, Joyce, 29, 77
Grigg, Sir Edward (afterwards Lord Altrincham), 138

Harrison, Rose, 62, 63
Hever Castle, 16
Hitler, Adolph, 136, 137 139, 145
Hollis, Christopher, 196
Hopkinson, Maj. Gen. G. F., 152–4
Hudson's Bay Company, 10
Hughes-Hallet, Vice-Admiral John, M.P., 182

Jones, Thomas, C.H., 81, 138

Kerr, Philip, *see* Lothian, Marquis of

Labour Party, British
Oxford, nineteen-thirties, 103, 104
in Parliament, 187, 213, 214
Lancaster, Nancy, 26, 79, 125
Langhorne, Chiswell Dabney, 22–5, 32–4, 219
Langhorne, Buck, 30, 31
Langhorne, Harry, 29, 30
Langhorne, Keene, 29, 30
Lee, Edwin, 61, 63
Lloyd George, Rt Hon. David (afterwards Earl), 142
Lothian, Philip, Marquis of, 54, 55, 137, 139–45
Lovat, Lord, 182–4
Lyttelton, Rt Hon. Oliver (afterwards Viscount Chandos), 190

McDonnell, Hon. Angus (quoted), 31–4
McDonnell, Hon. James, 105
Macmillan, Rt Hon. Harold, M.P., 198
Marie, Queen of Roumania, 45
Masaryk, Jan, 211, 212
Maxton, James, M.P., 189
Milner, Viscount, 140, 141
Montgomery of Alamein, Field Marshal Viscount, 168–71
Munnings, Sir Alfred, P.R.A., 84

New York—politics, 14, 15, 36
Nicolson, Hon. Sir Harold, 20, 177

Observer, The, 17, 137, 138, 145, 201

Patton, Gen. George, 160, 167
3rd U.S. Army, 159–62
Perkins, Mrs Moncure, 25
Phipps, Paul, 29
Phipps, Tommy, 29

Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 145
Ridgeway, Gen. Mathew, 167–8

Salter, Dr A. (afterwards Lord), 69, 70
Shaw, George Bernard, 79
Shaw, Robert, 28
Shaw, R. G. (Bobbie), 38, 77–9, 124–125
Smithers, Sir Waldron, M.P., 193
Spender-Clay, Lt Col. Herbert, M.P., 176, 178
Spender-Clay, Hon. Pauline, 18, 176
Stanley, Rt Hon. Oliver, M.P., 190

Todd, Sarah, 10

Upcott, J. D., 99

Walter, John, proprietor of *The Times*, 146
Warre, Major Anthony, 151
Winn, Hon. R. H., 26, 74, 77
Winn, Alice, 26, 79
Winterton, Earl, 196